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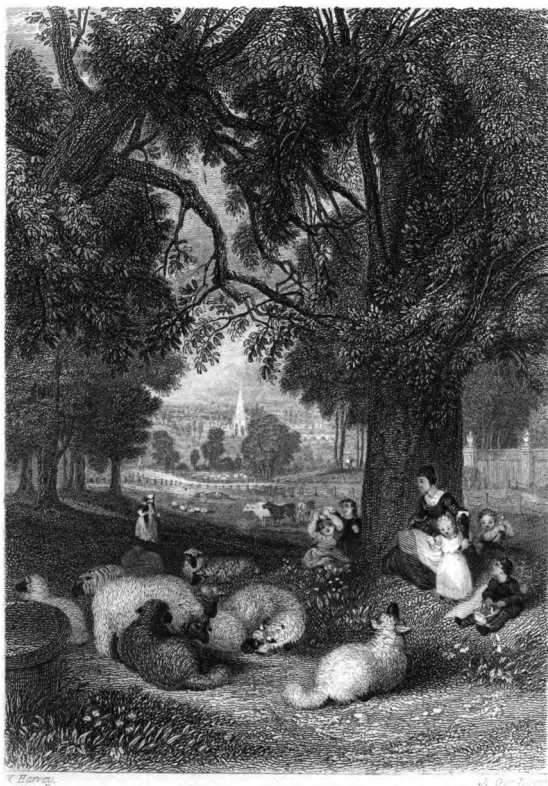


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OUR VILLAGE.



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OUR VILLAGE

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FIRST SERIES

WILKES:

HENRY D. BROWN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN

1848.

OUR VILLAGE:

SKETCHES OF
RURAL CHARACTER AND SCENERY.

BY
MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

NEW EDITION.



FIRST SERIES.

LONDON :
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PREFACE.

THE following pages contain an attempt to delineate country scenery and country manners, as they exist in a small village in the south of England. The writer may at least claim the merit of a hearty love of her subject, and of that local and personal familiarity, which only a long residence in one neighbourhood could have enabled her to attain. Her descriptions have always been written on the spot, and at the moment, and in nearly every instance with the closest and most resolute fidelity to the place and the people. If she be accused of having given a brighter aspect to her villagers than is usually met with in books, she cannot help it, and would not if she could. She has painted, as they appeared to her, their little frailties and their many virtues, under an intense and thankful conviction, that in every condition of life goodness and happiness may be found by those who seek them, and never more surely than in the fresh air, the shade, and the sunshine of nature.

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OUR VILLAGE.



Of all situations for a constant residence, that which appears to me most delightful is a little village far in the country ; a small neighbourhood, not of fine mansions finely peopled, but of cottages and cottage-like houses, “messuages or tenements,” as a friend of mine calls such ignoble and non-descript dwellings, with inhabitants whose faces are as familiar to us as the flowers in our garden ; a little world of our own, close-packed and insulated like ants in an ant-hill, or bees in a hive, or sheep in a fold, or nuns in a convent, or sailors in a ship ; where we know every one, are known to every one, interested in every one, and authorized to hope that every one feels an interest in us. How pleasant it is to slide into these true-hearted feelings from the kindly and unconscious influence of habit, and to learn to know and to love the people about us, with all their peculiarities, just as we learn to know and to love the nooks and turns of the shady lanes and sunny commons that we pass

every day. Even in books I like a confined locality, and so do the critics when they talk of the unities. Nothing is so tiresome as to be whirled half over Europe at the chariot-wheels of a hero, to go to sleep at Vienna, and awaken at Madrid ; it produces a real fatigue, a weariness of spirit. On the other hand, nothing is so delightful as to sit down in a country village in one of Miss Austen's delicious novels, quite sure before we leave it to become intimate with every spot and every person it contains ; or to ramble with Mr. White* over his own parish of Selborne, and form a friendship with the fields and coppices, as well as with the birds, mice, and squirrels, who inhabit them ; or to sail with Robinson Crusoe to his island, and live there with him and his goats and his man Friday ;—how much we dread any new comers, any fresh importation of savage or sailor ! we never sympathize for a moment in our hero's want of company, and are quite grieved when he gets away ;—or to be shipwrecked with Ferdinand on that other lovelier island—the island of Prospero, and Miranda, and Caliban, and Ariel, and nobody else, none of Dryden's exotic inventions :—that is best of all. And a small neighbourhood is as good in sober waking reality as in poetry or prose ; a village neighbourhood, such as this Berkshire hamlet in which I write, a long, straggling, winding street at the bottom of a fine eminence, with a road through it, always abounding in carts, horsemen, and carriages, and lately enlivened by a stage-coach from B—— to S——, which passed through about ten days ago, and will I suppose return some time or other. There are coaches of all varieties now-a-days ; perhaps this may be intended for a monthly diligence, or a fortnight fly. Will you walk with me through our village, courteous reader ? The journey is not long. We will begin at the lower end, and proceed up the hill.

* White's Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne ; one of the most fascinating books ever written. I wonder that no naturalist has adopted the same plan.

The tidy, square, red cottage on the right hand, with the long well-stocked garden by the side of the road, belongs to a retired publican from a neighbouring town ; a substantial person with a comely wife ; one who piques himself on independence and idleness, talks politics, reads newspapers, hates the minister, and cries out for reform. He introduced into our peaceful vicinage the rebellious innovation of an illumination on the queen's acquittal. Remonstrance and persuasion were in vain ; he talked of liberty and broken windows—so we all lighted up. Oh ! how he shone that night with candles, and laurel, and white bows, and gold paper, and a transparency (originally designed for a pocket-handkerchief) with a flaming portrait of her Majesty, hatted and feathered, in red ochre. He had no rival in the village, that we all acknowledged ; the very bonfire was less splendid ; the little boys reserved their best crackers to be expended in his honour, and he gave them full sixpence more than any one else. He would like an illumination once a month ; for it must not be concealed that, in spite of gardening, of newspaper reading, of jaunting about in his little cart, and frequenting both church and meeting, our worthy neighbour begins to feel the weariness of idleness. He hangs over his gate, and tries to entice passengers to stop and chat ; he volunteers little jobs all round, smokes cherry trees to cure the blight, and traces and blows up all the wasp-nests in the parish. I have seen a great many wasps in our garden to-day, and shall enchant him with the intelligence. He even assists his wife in her sweepings and dustings. Poor man ! he is a very respectable person, and would be a very happy one, if he would add a little employment to his dignity. It would be the salt of life to him.

Next to his house, though parted from it by another long garden with a yew arbour at the end, is the pretty dwelling of the shoemaker, a pale, sickly-looking, black-haired man, the very model of sober industry. There he sits in his little

shop from early morning till late at night. An earthquake would hardly stir him : the illumination did not. He stuck immoveably to his last, from the first lighting up, through the long blaze and the slow decay, till his large solitary candle was the only light in the place. One cannot conceive any thing more perfect than the contempt which the man of transparencies and the man of shoes must have felt for each other on that evening. There was at least as much vanity in the sturdy industry as in the strenuous idleness, for our shoemaker is a man of substance, he employs three journeymen, two lame, and one a dwarf, so that his shop looks like an hospital ; he has purchased the lease of his commodious dwelling, some even say that he has bought it out and out ; and he has only one pretty daughter, a light, delicate, fair-haired girl of fourteen, the champion, protectress, and playfellow of every brat under three years old, whom she jumps, dances, dandles, and feeds all day long. A very attractive person is that child-loving girl. I have never seen any one in her station who possessed so thoroughly that undefinable charm, the lady-look. See her on a Sunday in her simplicity and her white frock, and she might pass for an earl's daughter. She likes flowers too, and has a profusion of white stocks under her window, as pure and delicate as herself.

The first house on the opposite side of the way is the blacksmith's ; a gloomy dwelling, where the sun never seems to shine ; dark and smoky within and without, like a forge. The blacksmith is a high officer in our little state, nothing less than a constable ; but, alas ! alas ! when tumults arise, and the constable is called for, he will commonly be found in the thickest of the fray. Lucky would it be for his wife and her eight children if there were no public-house in the land : an inveterate inclination to enter those bewitching doors is Mr. Constable's only fault.

Next to this official dwelling is a spruce brick tenement, red, high, and narrow, boasting, one above another, three

sash-windows, the only sash-windows in the village, with a clematis on one side and a rose on the other, tall and narrow like itself. That slender mansion has a fine, genteel look. The little parlour seems made for Hogarth's old maid and her stunted footboy ; for tea and card-parties,—it would just hold one table ; for the rustle of faded silks, and the splendour of old china ; for the delight of four by honours, and a little snug, quiet scandal between the deals ; for affected gentility and real starvation. This should have been its destiny ; but fate has been unpropitious : it belongs to a plump, merry, bustling dame, with four fat, rosy, noisy children, the very essence of vulgarity and plenty.

Then comes the village shop, like other village shops, multifarious as a bazaar ; a repository for bread, shoes, tea, cheese, tape, ribands, and bacon ; for every thing, in short, except the one particular thing which you happen to want at the moment, and will be sure not to find. The people are civil and thriving, and frugal withal ; they have let the upper part of their house to two young women (one of them is a pretty blue-eyed girl) who teach little children their A B C, and make caps and gowns for their mammas,—parcel schoolmistress, parcel mantua-maker. I believe they find adorning the body a more profitable vocation than adorning the mind.

Divided from the shop by a narrow yard, and opposite the shoemaker's, is a habitation of whose inmates I shall say nothing. A cottage—no—a miniature house, with many additions, little odds and ends of places, pantries, and what not ; all angles, and of a charming in-and-outness ; a little bricked court before one half, and a little flower-yard before the other ; the walls, old and weather-stained, covered with hollyhocks, roses, honeysuckles, and a great apricot-tree ; the casements full of geraniums ; (ah, there is our superb white cat peeping out from amongst them ;) the closets (our landlord has the assurance to call them rooms) full of contrivances and corner-cupboards ; and the little garden behind full of common flowers, tulips, pinks, larkspurs, peonies, stocks, and carnations, with

an arbour of privet, not unlike a sentry-box, where one lives in a delicious green light, and looks out on the gayest of all gay flower-beds. That house was built on purpose to show in what an exceeding small compass comfort may be packed. Well, I will loiter there no longer.

The next tenement is a place of importance, the Rose inn ; a white-washed building, retired from the road behind its fine swinging sign, with a little bow-window room coming out on one side, and forming, with our stable on the other, a sort of open square, which is the constant resort of carts, waggons, and return chaises. There are two carts there now, and mine host is serving them with beer in his eternal red waistcoat. He is a thriving man and a portly, as his waistcoat attests, which has been twice let out within this twelvemonth. Our landlord has a stirring wife, a hopeful son, and a daughter, the belle of the village ; not so pretty as the fair nymph of the shoe-shop, and far less elegant, but ten times as fine ; all curl-papers in the morning, like a porcupine, all curls in the afternoon, like a poodle, with more flounces than curl-papers, and more lovers than curls. Miss Phoebe is fitter for town than country ; and, to do her justice, she has a consciousness of that fitness, and turns her steps town-ward as often as she can. She is gone to B—— to-day with her last and principal lover, a recruiting serjeant—a man as tall as Serjeant Kite, and as impudent. Some day or other he will carry off Miss Phoebe.

In a line with the bow-window room is a low garden-wall, belonging to a house under repair :—the white house opposite the collar-maker's shop, with four lime-trees before it, and a waggon-load of bricks at the door. That house is the plaything of a wealthy, well-meaning, whimsical person, who lives about a mile off. He has a passion for brick and mortar, and, being too wise to meddle with his own residence, diverts himself with altering and re-altering, improving and re-improving, doing and undoing here. It is a perfect Penelope's web. Carpenters and bricklayers have been at work for these eighteen

months, and yet I sometimes stand and wonder whether any thing has really been done. One exploit in last June was, however, by no means equivocal. Our good neighbour fancied that the limes shaded the rooms, and made them dark, (there was not a creature in the house but the workmen,) so he had all the leaves stripped from every tree. There they stood, poor miserable skeletons, as bare as Christmas under the glowing midsummer sun. Nature revenged herself, in her own sweet and gracious manner; fresh leaves sprang out, and at nearly Christmas the foliage was as brilliant as when the outrage was committed.

Next door lives a carpenter, "famed ten miles round, and worthy all his fame,"—few cabinet-makers surpass him, with his excellent wife, and their little daughter Lizzy, the plaything and queen of the village, a child three years old according to the register, but six in size and strength and intellect, in power and in self-will. She manages every body in the place, her school-mistress included; turns the wheeler's children out of their own little cart, and makes them draw her; seduces cakes and lollypops from the very shop window; makes the lazy carry her, the silent talk to her, the grave romp with her; does any thing she pleases; is absolutely irresistible. Her chief attraction lies in her exceeding power of loving, and her firm reliance on the love and indulgence of others. How impossible it would be to disappoint the dear little girl when she runs to meet you, slides her pretty hand into yours, looks up gladly in your face, and says, "Come!" You must go: you cannot help it. Another part of her charm is her singular beauty. Together with a good deal of the character of Napoleon, she has something of his square, sturdy, upright form, with the finest limbs in the world, a complexion purely English, a round laughing face, sunburnt and rosy, large merry blue eyes, curling brown hair, and a wonderful play of countenance. She has the imperial attitudes too, and loves to stand with her hands behind her, or folded over her bosom; and sometimes,

when she has a little touch of shyness, she clasps them together on the top of her head, pressing down her shining curls, and looking so exquisitely pretty ! Yes, Lizzy is queen of the village ! She has but one rival in her dominions, a certain white grey-hound called Mayflower, much her friend, who resembles her in beauty and strength, in playfulness, and almost in sagacity, and reigns over the animal world as she over the human. They are both coming with me, Lizzy and Lizzy's "pretty May." We are now at the end of the street ; a cross-lane, a rope-walk shaded with limes and oaks, and a cool clear pond overhung with elms, lead us to the bottom of the hill. There is still one house round the corner, ending in a picturesque wheeler's shop. The dwelling-house is more ambitious. Look at the fine flowered window-blinds, the green door with the brass knocker, and the somewhat prim but very civil person, who is sending off a labouring man with sirs and curtsies enough for a prince of the blood. Those are the curate's lodgings—apartments his landlady would call them : he lives with his own family four miles off, but once or twice a week he comes to his neat little parlour to write sermons, to marry, or to bury, as the case may require. Never were better or kinder people than his host and hostess : and there is a reflection of clerical importance about them, since their connexion with the Church, which is quite edifying—a decorum, a gravity, a solemn politeness. Oh, to see the worthy wheeler carry the gown after his lodger on a Sunday, nicely pinned up in his wife's best handkerchief !—or to hear him rebuke a squalling child or a squabbling woman ! The curate is nothing to him. He is fit to be perpetual churchwarden.

We must now cross the lane into the shady rope-walk. That pretty white cottage opposite, which stands straggling at the end of the village in a garden full of flowers, belongs to our mason, the shortest of men, and his handsome, tall wife : he, a dwarf, with the voice of a giant ; one starts when he

begins to talk as if he were shouting through a speaking trumpet; she, the sister, daughter, and grand-daughter, of a long line of gardeners, and no contemptible one herself. It is very magnanimous in me not to hate her; for she beats me in my own way, in chrysanthemums, and dahlias, and the like gauds. Her plants are sure to live; mine have a sad trick of dying, perhaps because I love them, "not wisely, but too well," and kill them with over-kindness. Half-way up the hill is another detached cottage, the residence of an officer, and his beautiful family. That eldest boy, who is hanging over the gate, and looking with such intense childish admiration at my Lizzy, might be a model for a Cupid.

How pleasantly the road winds up the hill, with its broad green borders and hedge-rows so thickly timbered! How finely the evening sun falls on that sandy excavated bank, and touches the farm-house on the top of the eminence! and how clearly defined and relieved is the figure of the man who is just coming down! It is poor John Evans, the gardener—an excellent gardener till about ten years ago, when he lost his wife, and became insane. He was sent to St. Luke's, and dismissed as cured; but his power was gone and his strength; he could no longer manage a garden, nor submit to the restraint, nor encounter the fatigue of regular employment: so he retreated to the workhouse, the pensioner and factotum of the village, amongst whom he divides his services. His mind often wanders, intent on some fantastic and impracticable plan, and lost to present objects; but he is perfectly harmless, and full of a child-like simplicity, a smiling contentedness, a most touching gratitude. Every one is kind to John Evans, for there is that about him which must be loved; and his unprotectedness, his utter defencelessness, have an irresistible claim on every better feeling. I know nobody who inspires so deep and tender a pity; he improves all around him. He is useful, too, to the extent of his little power; will do any thing, but loves gardening best, and still piques himself on his old arts of pruning fruit-trees, and raising cucumbers. He is the hap-

piest of men just now, for he has the management of a melon bed—a melon bed!—fie! What a grand, pompous name was that for three melon plants under a hand-light! John Evans is sure that they will succeed. We shall see: as the chancellor said, “I doubt.”

We are now on the very brow of the eminence, close to the Hill-house and its beautiful garden. On the outer edge of the paling, hanging over the bank that skirts the road, is an old thorn—such a thorn! The long sprays covered with snowy blossoms, so graceful, so elegant, so lightsome, and yet so rich! There only wants a pool under the thorn to give a still lovelier reflection, quivering and trembling, like a tuft of feathers, whiter and greener than the life, and more prettily mixed with the bright blue sky. There should indeed be a pool; but on the dark grass-plot, under the high bank, which is crowned by that magnificent plume, there is something that does almost as well,—Lizzy and Mayflower in the midst of a game at romps, “making a sun-shine in the shady place;” Lizzy rolling, laughing, clapping her hands, and glowing like a rose; Mayflower playing about her like summer lightning, dazzling the eyes with her sudden turns, her leaps, her bounds, her attacks, and her escapes. She darts round the lovely little girl, with the same momentary touch that the swallow skims over the water, and has exactly the same power of flight, the same matchless ease and strength and grace. What a pretty picture they would make; what a pretty foreground they do make to the real landscape! The road winding down the hill with a slight bend, like that in the High-street at Oxford; a waggon slowly ascending, and a horseman passing it at a full trot—(ah! Lizzy, Mayflower will certainly desert you to have a gambol with that blood-horse!) half-way down, just at the turn, the red cottage of the lieutenant, covered with vines, the very image of comfort and content; farther down, on the opposite side, the small white dwelling of the little mason; then the limes and the rope-walk; then the village street, peeping through the trees, whose clustering tops hide

all but the chimneys, and various roofs of the houses, and here and there some angle of a wall : farther on, the elegant town of B——, with its fine old church-towers and spires ; the whole view shut in by a range of chalky hills ; and over every part of the picture, trees so profusely scattered, that it appears like a woodland scene, with glades and villages intermixed. The trees are of all kinds and all hues, chiefly the finely-shaped elm, of so bright and deep a green, the tips of whose high outer branches drop down with such a crisp and garland-like richness, and the oak, whose stately form is just now so splendidly adorned by the sunny colouring of the young leaves. Turning again up the hill, we find ourselves on that peculiar charm of English scenery, a green common, divided by the road ; the right side fringed by hedgerows and trees, with cottages and farm-houses irregularly placed, and terminated by a double avenue of noble oaks ; the left, prettier still, dappled by bright pools of water, and islands of cottages and cottage-gardens, and sinking gradually down to corn-fields and meadows, and an old farm-house, with pointed roofs and clustered chimneys, looking out from its blooming orchard, and backed by woody hills. The common is itself the prettiest part of the prospect ; half covered with low furze, whose golden blossoms reflect so intensely the last beams of the setting sun, and alive with cows and sheep, and two sets of cricketers ; one of young men, surrounded by spectators, some standing, some sitting, some stretched on the grass, all taking a delighted interest in the game ; the other, a merry group of little boys, at a humble distance, for whom even cricket is scarcely lively enough, shouting, leaping, and enjoying themselves to their hearts' content. But cricketers and country boys are too important persons in our village to be talked of merely as figures in the landscape. They deserve an individual introduction—an essay to themselves—and they shall have it. No fear of forgetting the good-humoured faces that meet us in our walks every day.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

FROST.



JANUARY 23d.—At noon to-day I and my white greyhound, Mayflower, set out for a walk into a very beautiful world,—a sort of silent fairy-land,—a creation of that matchless magician the hoar-frost. There had been just snow enough to cover the earth and all its colours with one sheet of pure and uniform white, and just time enough since the snow had fallen to allow the hedges to be freed of their fleecy load, and clothed with a delicate coating of rime. The atmosphere was deliciously calm ; soft, even mild, in spite of the thermometer ; no perceptible air, but a stillness that might almost be felt ; the sky, rather grey than blue, throwing out in bold relief the snow-covered roofs of our village, and the rimy trees that rise above them, and the sun shining dimly as through a veil, giving a pale fair light, like the moon, only brighter. There was a silence, too, that might become the moon, as we stood at our little gate looking up the quiet street ; a sabbath-like pause of work and play, rare on a work-day ; nothing was audible but the pleasant hum of frost, that low monotonous

sound, which is perhaps the nearest approach that life and nature can make to absolute silence. The very waggons as they come down the hill along the beaten track of crisp yellowish frost-dust, glide along like shadows; even May's bounding footsteps, at her height of glee and of speed, fall like snow upon snow.

But we shall have noise enough presently: May has stopped at Lizzy's door; and Lizzy, as she sat on the window-sill with her bright rosy face laughing through the casement, has seen her and disappeared. She is coming. No! The key is turning in the door, and sounds of evil omen issue through the key-hole—sturdy “let me outs,” and “I will goes,” mixed with shrill cries on May and on me from Lizzy, piercing through a low continuous harangue, of which the prominent parts are apologies, chilblains, sliding, broken bones, lollypops, rods, and gingerbread, from Lizzy's careful mother. “Don't scratch the door, May! Don't roar so, my Lizzy! We'll call for you as we come back.”—“I'll go now! Let me out! I will go!” are the last words of Miss Lizzy. Mem. Not to spoil that child—if I can help it. But I do think her mother might have let the poor little soul walk with us to-day. Nothing worse for children than coddling. Nothing better for chilblains than exercise. Besides, I don't believe she has any—and as to breaking her bones in sliding, I don't suppose there's a slide on the common. These murmuring cogitations have brought us up the hill, and half-way across the light and airy common, with its bright expanse of snow and its clusters of cottages, whose turf fires send such wreaths of smoke sailing up the air, and diffuse such aromatic fragrance around. And now comes the delightful sound of childish voices, ringing with glee and merriment almost from beneath our feet. Ah, Lizzy, your mother was right! They are shouting from that deep irregular pool, all glass now, where, on two long, smooth, liny slides, half a dozen ragged urchins are slipping along in tottering triumph. Half a dozen steps bring

us to the bank right above them. May can hardly resist the temptation of joining her friends, for most of the varlets are of her acquaintance, especially the rogue who leads the slide,—he with the brimless hat, whose bronzed complexion and white flaxen hair, reversing the usual lights and shadows of the human countenance, give so strange and foreign a look to his flat and comic features. This hobgoblin, Jack Rapley by name, is May's great crony; and she stands on the brink of the steep, irregular descent, her black eyes fixed full upon him, as if she intended him the favour of jumping on his head. She does: she is down, and upon him: but Jack Rapley is not easily to be knocked off his feet. He saw her coming, and in the moment of her leap sprung dexterously off the slide on the rough ice, steadying himself by the shoulder of the next in the file, which unlucky follower, thus unexpectedly checked in his career, fell plump backwards, knocking down the rest of the line like a nest of card-houses. There is no harm done; but there they lie, roaring, kicking, sprawling, in every attitude of comic distress, whilst Jack Rapley and Mayflower, sole authors of this calamity, stand apart from the throng, fondling, and coquetting, and complimenting each other, and very visibly laughing, May in her black eyes, Jack in his wide, close-shut mouth, and his whole monkey-face, at their comrades' mischances. I think, Miss May, you may as well come up again, and leave Master Rapley to fight your battles. He'll get out of the scrape. He is a rustic wit—a sort of Robin Goodfellow—the sauciest, idlest, cleverest, best-natured boy in the parish; always foremost in mischief, and always ready to do a good turn. The sages of our village predict sad things of Jack Rapley, so that I am sometimes a little ashamed to confess, before wise people, that I have a lurking predilection for him, (in common with other naughty ones,) and that I like to hear him talk to May almost as well as she does. “Come, May!” and up she springs, as light as a bird. The road is gay now; carts and post-chaises, and

girls in red cloaks, and, afar off, looking almost like a toy, the coach. It meets us fast and soon. How much happier the walkers look than the riders—especially the frost-bitten gentleman, and the shivering lady with the invisible face, sole passengers of that commodious machine! Hooded, veiled, and bonneted as she is, one sees from her attitude how miserable she would look uncovered.

Another pond, and another noise of children. More sliding? Oh no! This is a sport of higher pretension. Our good neighbour, the lieutenant, skating, and his own pretty little boys, and two or three other four-year-old elves, standing on the brink in an ecstasy of joy and wonder! Oh what happy spectators! And what a happy performer! They admiring, he admired, with an ardour and sincerity never excited by all the quadrilles and the spread-eagles of the Seine and the Serpentine. He really skaits well though, and I am glad I came this way; for, with all the father's feelings sitting gaily at his heart, it must still gratify the pride of skill to have one spectator at that solitary pond who has seen skating before.

Now we have reached the trees,—the beautiful trees! never so beautiful as to-day. Imagine the effect of a straight and regular double avenue of oaks, nearly a mile long, arching over-head, and closing into perspective like the roof and columns of a cathedral, every tree and branch incrusting with the bright and delicate congelation of hoar-frost, white and pure as snow, delicate and defined as carved ivory. How beautiful it is, how uniform, how various, how filling, how satiating to the eye and to the mind—above all, how melancholy! There is a thrilling awfulness, an intense feeling of simple power in that naked and colourless beauty, which falls on the earth like the thoughts of death—death pure, and glorious, and smiling,—but still death. Sculpture has always the same effect on my imagination, and painting never. Colour is life.—We are now at the end of this magnificent avenue,

and at the top of a steep eminence commanding a wide view over four counties—a landscape of snow. A deep lane leads abruptly down the hill; a mere narrow cart-track, sinking between high banks clothed with fern and furze and low broom, crowned with luxuriant hedgerows, and famous for their summer smell of thyme. How lovely these banks are now—the tall weeds and the gorse fixed and stiffened in the hoar-frost, which fringes round the bright prickly holly, the pendent foliage of the bramble, and the deep orange leaves of the pollard oaks! Oh, this is rime in its loveliest form! And there is still a berry here and there on the holly, “blushing in its natural coral” through the delicate tracery, still a stray hip or haw for the birds, who abound here always. The poor birds, how tame they are, how sadly tame! There is the beautiful and rare crested wren, “that shadow of a bird,” as White of Selborne calls it, perched in the middle of the hedge, nestling as it were amongst the cold bare boughs, seeking, poor pretty thing, for the warmth it will not find. And there, farther on, just under the bank, by the slender runlet, which still trickles between its transparent fantastic margin of thin ice, as if it were a thing of life,—there, with a swift, scudding motion, flits, in short low flights, the gorgeous kingfisher, its magnificent plumage of scarlet and blue flashing in the sun, like the glories of some tropical bird. He is come for water to this little spring by the hill side,—water which even his long bill and slender head can hardly reach, so nearly do the fantastic forms of those garland-like icy margins meet over the tiny stream beneath. It is rarely that one sees the shy beauty so close or so long: and it is pleasant to see him in the grace and beauty of his natural liberty, the only way to look at a bird. We used, before we lived in a street, to fix a little board outside the parlour window, and cover it with bread-crumbs in the hard weather. It was quite delightful to see the pretty things come and feed, to conquer their shyness, and do away their mistrust. First came the more social tribes,

"the robin red-breast and the wren," cautiously, suspiciously, picking up a crumb on the wing, with the little keen bright eye fixed on the window ; then they would stop for two pecks ; then stay till they were satisfied. The shyer birds, tamed by their example, came next ; and at last one saucy fellow of a blackbird—a sad glutton, he would clear the board in two minutes,—used to tap his yellow bill against the window for more. How we loved the fearless confidence of that fine, frank-hearted creature ! And surely he loved us. I wonder the practice is not more general.—"May ! May ! naughty May !" She has frightened away the kingfisher ; and now, in her coaxing penitence, she is covering me with snow. "Come, pretty May ! it is time to go home."

THAW.

January 28th.—We have had rain, and snow, and frost, and rain again ; four days of absolute confinement. Now it is a thaw and a flood ; but our light gravelly soil, and country boots, and country hardihood, will carry us through. What a dripping, comfortless day it is ! just like the last days of November : no sun, no sky, grey or blue ; one low, overhanging, dark, dismal cloud, like London smoke : Mayflower is out coursing too, and Lizzy gone to school. Never mind. Up the hill again ! Walk we must. Oh what a watery world to look back upon ! Thames, Kennet, Loddon—all overflowed ; our famous town, inland once, turned into a sort of Venice ; C. park converted into an island ; and the long range of meadows from B. to W. one huge unnatural lake, with trees growing out of it. Oh what a watery world !—I will look at it no longer. I will walk on. The road is alive again. Noise is re-born. Waggon creak, horses splash, carts rattle, and patters paddle through the dirt with more than their usual clink. The common has its old fine tints of green and brown, and its old variety of inhabitants, horses, cows, sheep, pigs, and don-

keys. The ponds are unfrozen, except where some melancholy piece of melting ice floats sullenly on the water ; and cackling geese and gabbling ducks have replaced the lieutenant and Jack Rapley. The avenue is chill and dark, the hedges are dripping, the lanes knee-deep, and all nature is in a state of " dissolution and thaw."

THE FIRST PRIMROSE.

MARCH 6th.—Fine March weather : boisterous, blustering, much wind and squalls of rain ; and yet the sky, where the clouds are swept away, deliciously blue, with snatches of sunshine, bright, and clear, and healthful, and the roads, in spite of the slight glittering showers, crisply dry. Altogether the day is tempting, very tempting. It will not do for the dear common, that windmill of a walk ; but the close sheltered lanes at the bottom of the hill, which keep out just enough of the stormy air, and let in all the sun, will be delightful. Past our old house, and round by the winding lanes, and the work-house, and across the lea, and so into the turnpike-road again,—that is our route for to-day. Forth we set, Mayflower and I, rejoicing in the sunshine, and still more in the wind, which gives such an intense feeling of existence, and, co-operating with brisk motion, sets our blood and our spirits in a glow. For mere physical pleasure, there is nothing perhaps equal to the enjoyment of being drawn, in a light carriage, against such a wind as this, by a blood-horse at his height of speed. Walking comes next to it ; but walking is not quite so luxurious or so spiritual, not quite so much what one fancies of flying, or being carried above the clouds in a balloon.

Nevertheless, a walk is a good thing ; especially under this southern hedge-row, where nature is just beginning to live again : the periwinkles, with their starry blue flowers, and their shining myrtle-like leaves, garlanding the bushes ; wood-

bines and elder-trees pushing out their small swelling buds ; and grasses and mosses springing forth in every variety of brown and green. Here we are at the corner where four lanes meet, or rather where a passable road of stones and gravel crosses an impassable one of beautiful but treacherous turf, and where the small white farm-house, scarcely larger than a cottage, and the well-stocked rick-yard behind, tell of comfort and order, but leave all unguessed the great riches of the master. How he became so rich is almost a puzzle ; for, though the farm be his own, it is not large ; and though prudent and frugal on ordinary occasions, farmer Barnard is no miser. His horses, dogs, and pigs are the best kept in the parish,—May herself, although her beauty be injured by her fatness, half envies the plight of his bitch Fly : his wife's gowns and shawls cost as much again as any shawls or gowns in the village ; his dinner parties (to be sure they are not frequent) display twice the ordinary quantity of good things—two couples of ducks, two dishes of green peas, two turkey poults, two gammons of bacon, two plum-puddings ; moreover, he keeps a single-horse chaise, and has built and endowed a Methodist chapel. Yet is he the richest man in these parts. Every thing prospers with him. Money drifts about him like snow. He looks like a rich man. There is a sturdy squareness of face and figure ; a good-humoured obstinacy ; a civil importance. He never boasts of his wealth, or gives himself undue airs ; but nobody can meet him at market or vestry without finding out immediately that he is the richest man there. They have no child to all this money ; but there is an adopted nephew, a fine spirited lad, who may, perhaps, some day or other, play the part of a fountain to the reservoir.

Now turn up the wide road till we come to the open common, with its park-like trees, its beautiful stream, wandering and twisting along, and its rural bridge. Here we turn again, past that other white farm-house, half hidden by the magnificent elms which stand before it. Ah ! riches dwell not there ;

but there is found the next best thing—an industrious and light-hearted poverty. Twenty years ago Rachel Hilton was the prettiest and merriest lass in the country. Her father, an old game-keeper, had retired to a village ale-house, where his good beer, his social humour, and his black-eyed daughter, brought much custom. She had lovers by the score ; but Joseph White, the dashing and lively son of an opulent farmer, carried off the fair Rachel. They married and settled here, and here they live still, as merrily as ever, with fourteen children of all ages and sizes, from nineteen years to nineteen months, working harder than any people in the parish, and enjoying themselves more. I would match them for labour and laughter against any family in England. She is a blithe, jolly dame, whose beauty has amplified into comeliness : he is tall, and thin, and bony, with sinews like whipcord, a strong lively voice, a sharp weather-beaten face, and eyes and lips that smile and brighten when he speaks into a most contagious hilarity. They are very poor, and I often wish them richer ; but I don't know—perhaps it might put them out.

Quite close to farmer White's is a little ruinous cottage, white-washed once, and now in a sad state of betweenity, where dangling stockings and shirts, swelled by the wind, drying in a neglected garden, give signal of a washerwoman. There dwells, at present in single blessedness, Betty Adams, the wife of our sometimes gardener. I never saw any one who so much reminded me in person of that lady whom every body knows, Mistress Meg Merrilies ;—as tall, as grizzled, as stately, as dark, as gipsy-looking, bonneted and gowned like her prototype, and almost as oracular. Here the resemblance ceases. Mrs. Adams is a perfectly honest, industrious, painstaking person, who earns a good deal of money by washing and charing, and spends it in other luxuries than tidiness,—in green tea, and gin, and snuff. Her husband lives in a great family, ten miles off. He is a capital gardener—or rather he would be so, if he were not too ambitious. He undertakes all

things, and finishes none. But a smooth tongue, a knowing look, and a great capacity of labour, carry him through. Let him but like his ale and his master, and he will do work enough for four. Give him his own way, and his full quantum, and nothing comes amiss to him.

Ah, May is bounding forward ! Her silly heart leaps at the sight of the old place—and so, in good truth, does mine. What a pretty place it was,—or rather, how pretty I thought it ! I suppose I should have thought any place so where I had spent eighteen happy years. But it was really pretty. A large, heavy, white house, in the simplest style, surrounded by fine oaks and elms, and tall massy plantations shaded down into a beautiful lawn by wild overgrown shrubs, bowery acacias, ragged sweet-briers, promontories of dog-wood, and Portugal laurel, and bays, overhung by laburnum and bird-cherry ; a long piece of water letting light into the picture, and looking just like a natural stream, the banks as rude and wild as the shrubbery, interspersed with broom, and furze, and bramble, and pollard oaks covered with ivy and honeysuckle ; the whole enclosed by an old mossy park paling, and terminating in a series of rich meadows, richly planted. This is an exact description of the home which, three years ago, it nearly broke my heart to leave. What a tearing up by the root it was ! I have pitied cabbage-plants and celery, and all transplantable things, ever since ; though, in common with them, and with other vegetables, the first agony of the transportation being over, I have taken such firm and tenacious hold of my new soil, that I would not for the world be pulled up again, even to be restored to the old beloved ground ;—not even if its beauty were undiminished, which is by no means the case ; for in those three years it has thrice changed masters, and every successive possessor has brought the curse of improvement upon the place : so that between filling up the water to cure dampness, cutting down trees to let in prospects, planting to keep them out, shutting up windows to darken the inside of

the house, (by which means one end looks precisely as an eight of spades would do that should have the misfortune to lose one of his corner pips,) and building colonnades to lighten the out, added to a general clearance of pollards, and brambles, and ivy, and honeysuckles, and park palings, and irregular shrubs, the poor place is so transmogrified, that if it had its old looking-glass, the water, back again, it would not know its own face. And yet I love to haunt round about it: so does May. Her particular attraction is a certain broken bank full of rabbit burrows, into which she insinuates her long pliant head and neck, and tears her pretty feet by vain scratchings: mine is a warm sunny hedge-row, in the same remote field, famous for early flowers. Never was a spot more variously flowery: primroses yellow, lilac white, violets of either hue, cowslips, oxlips, arums, orchises, wild hyacinths, ground ivy, pansies, strawberries, heart's-ease, formed a small part of the Flora of that wild hedge-row. How profusely they covered the sunny open slope under the weeping birch, "the lady of the woods"—and how often have I started to see the early innocent brown snake, who loved the spot as well as I did, winding along the young blossoms, or rustling amongst the fallen leaves! There are primrose leaves already, and short green buds, but no flowers; not even in that furze cradle so full of roots, where they used to blow as in a basket. No, my May, no rabbits! no primroses! We may as well get over the gate into the woody winding lane, which will bring us home again.

Here we are, making the best of our way between the old elms that arch so solemnly over head, dark and sheltered even now. They say that a spirit haunts this deep pool—a white lady without a head. I cannot say that I have seen her, often as I have paced this lane at deep midnight, to hear the night-ingles, and look at the glow-worms;—but there, better and rarer than a thousand ghosts, dearer even than nightingales or glow-worms, there is a primrose, the first of the year; a

tuft of primroses, springing in yonder sheltered nook, from the mossy roots of an old willow, and living again in the clear bright pool. Oh, how beautiful they are—three fully blown, and two bursting buds! How glad I am I came this way! They are not to be reached. Even Jack Rapley's love of the difficult and the unattainable would fail him here: May herself could not stand on that steep bank. So much the better. Who would wish to disturb them? There they live in their innocent and fragrant beauty, sheltered from the storms, and rejoicing in the sunshine, and looking as if they could feel their happiness. Who would disturb them? Oh, how glad I am I came this way home!

VIOLETING.

MARCH 27th.—It is a dull grey morning, with a dewy feeling in the air; fresh, but not windy; cool, but not cold;—the very day for a person newly arrived from the heat, the glare, the noise, and the fever of London, to plunge into the remotest labyrinths of the country, and regain the repose of mind, the calmness of heart, which has been lost in that great Babel. I must go violeting—it is a necessity—and I must go alone: the sound of a voice, even my Lizzy's, the touch of Mayflower's head, even the bounding of her elastic foot, would disturb the serenity of feeling which I am trying to recover. I shall go quite alone, with my little basket, twisted like a bee-hive, which I love so well, because *she* gave it to me, and kept sacred to violets and to those whom I love; and I shall get out of the high-road the moment I can. I would not meet any one just now, even of those whom I best like to meet.

Ha!—Is not that group—a gentleman on a blood-horse, a lady keeping pace with him so gracefully and easily—see how prettily her veil waves in the wind created by her own rapid

motion!—and that gay, gallant boy, on the gallant white Arabian, curveting at their side, but ready to spring before them every instant—is not that chivalrous-looking party Mr. and Mrs. M. and dear B.? No! the servant is in a different livery. It is some of the ducal family, and one of their young Etonians. I may go on. I shall meet no one now; for I have fairly left the road, and am crossing the lea by one of those wandering paths, amidst the gorse, and the heath, and the low broom, which the sheep and lambs have made—a path turfy, elastic, thymy, and sweet, even at this season.

We have the good fortune to live in an unenclosed parish, and may thank the wise obstinacy of two or three sturdy farmers, and the lucky unpopularity of a ranting madcap lord of the manor, for preserving the delicious green patches, the islets of wilderness amidst cultivation, which form, perhaps, the peculiar beauty of English scenery. The common that I am passing now—the lea, as it is called—is one of the loveliest of these favoured spots. It is a little sheltered scene, retiring, as it were, from the village; sunk amidst higher lands, hills would be almost too grand a word: edged on one side by one gay high-road, and intersected by another; and surrounded by a most picturesque confusion of meadows, cottages, farms, and orchards; with a great pond in one corner, unusually bright and clear, giving a delightful cheerfulness and daylight to the picture. The swallows haunt that pond; so do the children. There is a merry group round it now; I have seldom seen it without one. Children love water, clear, bright, sparkling water; it excites and feeds their curiosity; it is motion and life.

The path that I am treading leads to a less lively spot, to that large heavy building on one side of the common, whose solid wings, jutting out far beyond the main body, occupy three sides of a square, and give a cold, shadowy look to the court. On one side is a gloomy garden, with an old man digging in it, laid out in straight dark beds of vegetables, pota-

toes, cabbages, onions, beans; all earthy and mouldy as a newly dug grave. Not a flower or flowering shrub! Not a rose-tree or currant-bush! Nothing but for sober, melancholy use. Oh, how different from the long irregular slips of the cottage-gardens, with their gay bunches of polyanthus and crocuses, their wall-flowers sending sweet odours through the narrow casement, and their gooseberry-trees bursting into a brilliancy of leaf, whose vivid greenness has the effect of a blossom on the eye! Oh, how different! On the other side of this gloomy abode is a meadow of that deep, intense emerald hue, which denotes the presence of stagnant water, surrounded by willows at regular distances, and like the garden, separated from the common by a wide, moat-like ditch. That is the parish workhouse. All about it is solid, substantial, useful;—but so dreary! so cold! so dark! There are children in the court, and yet all is silent. I always hurry past that place as if it were a prison. Restraint, sickness, age, extreme poverty, misery which I have no power to remove or alleviate,—these are the ideas, the feelings, which the sight of those walls excites; yet, perhaps, if not certainly, they contain less of that extreme desolation than the morbid fancy is apt to paint. There will be found order, cleanliness, food, clothing, warmth, refuge for the homeless, medicine and attendance for the sick, rest and sufficiency for old age, and sympathy, the true and active sympathy which the poor show to the poor, for the unhappy. There may be worse places than a parish workhouse—and yet I hurry past it. The feeling, the prejudice, will not be controlled.

The end of the dreary garden edges off into a close-sheltered lane, wandering and winding, like a rivulet, in gentle “sinuosities,” (to use a word once applied by Mr. Wilberforce to the Thames at Henley,) amidst green meadows, all alive with cattle, sheep, and beautiful lambs, in the very spring and pride of their tottering prettiness: or fields of arable land, more lively still with troops of stooping bean-setters, women and

children, in all varieties of costume and colour; and ploughs and harrows, with their whistling boys and steady carters, going through, with a slow and plodding industry, the main business of this busy season. What work bean-setting is! What a reverse of the position assigned to man to distinguish him from the beasts of the field! Only think of stooping for six, eight, ten hours a day, drilling holes in the earth with a little stick, and then dropping in the beans one by one. They are paid according to the quantity they plant: and some of the poor women used to be accused of clumping them—that is to say, of dropping more than one bean into a hole. It seems to me, considering the temptation, that not to clump is to be at the very pinnacle of human virtue.

Another turn in the lane, and we come to the old house standing amongst the high elms—the old farm-house, which always, I don't know why, carries back my imagination to Shakspeare's days. It is a long, low, irregular building, with one room, at an angle from the house, covered with ivy, fine white-veined ivy; the first floor of the main building projecting and supported by oaken beams, and one of the windows below, with its old casement and long narrow panes, forming the half of a shallow hexagon. A porch, with seats in it, surmounted by a pinnacle, pointed roofs, and clustered chimneys, complete the picture. Alas! it is little else but a picture! The very walls are crumbling to decay under a careless landlord and ruined tenant.

Now a few yards farther, and I reach the bank. Ah! I smell them already—their exquisite perfume steams and lingers in this moist, heavy air. Through this little gate, and along the green south bank of this green wheat-field, and they burst upon me, the lovely violets, in tenfold loveliness! The ground is covered with them, white and purple, enamelling the short dewy grass, looking but the more vividly coloured under the dull, leaden sky. There they lie by hundreds, by thousands. In former years I have been used to watch them

from the tiny green bud, till one or two stole into bloom. They never came on me before in such a sudden and luxuriant glory of simple beauty,—and I do really owe one pure and genuine pleasure to feverish London ! How beautifully they are placed too, on this sloping bank, with the palm branches waving over them, full of early bees, and mixing their honeyed scent with the more delicate violet odour ! How transparent and smooth and lusty are the branches, full of sap and life ! And there, just by the old mossy root, is a superb tuft of primroses, with a yellow butterfly hovering over them, like a flower floating on the air. What happiness to sit on this tufty knoll, and fill my basket with the blossoms ! What a renewal of heart and mind ! To inhabit such a scene of peace and sweetness is again to be fearless, gay, and gentle as a child. Then it is that thought becomes poetry, and feeling religion. Then it is that we are happy and good. Oh, that my whole life could pass so, floating on blissful and innocent sensation, enjoying in peace and gratitude the common blessings of Nature, thankful above all for the simple habits, the healthful temperament, which render them so dear ! Alas ! who may dare expect a life of such happiness ? But I can at least snatch and prolong the fleeting pleasure, can fill my basket with pure flowers, and my heart with pure thoughts ; can gladden my little home with their sweetness ; can divide my treasures with one, a dear one, who cannot seek them ; can see them when I shut my eyes ; and dream of them when I fall asleep.

THE COWSLIP-BALL.

MAY 16th.—There are moments in life when, without any visible or immediate cause, the spirits sink and fail, as it were, under the mere pressure of existence : moments of unaccountable depression, when one is weary of one's very

thoughts, haunted by images that will not depart—images many and various, but all painful ; friends lost, or changed, or dead ; hopes disappointed even in their accomplishment ; fruitless regrets, powerless wishes, doubt and fear, and self-distrust, and self-disapprobation. They who have known these feelings, (and who is there so happy as not to have known some of them ?) will understand why Alfieri became powerless, and Froissart dull ; and why even needle-work, the most effectual sedative, that grand soother and composer of woman's distress, fails to comfort me to-day. I will go out into the air this cool, pleasant afternoon, and try what that will do. I fancy that exercise, or exertion of any kind, is the true specific for nervousness. "Fling but a stone, the giant dies." I will go to the meadows, the beautiful meadows ! and I will have my materials of happiness, Lizzy and May, and a basket for flowers, and we will make a cowslip-ball. "Did you ever see a cowslip-ball, my Lizzy ?"—"No."—"Come away, then ; make haste ! run, Lizzy !"

And on we go, fast, fast ! down the road, across the lea, past the workhouse, along by the great pond, till we slide into the deep narrow lane, whose hedges seem to meet over the water, and win our way to the little farm-house at the end. "Through the farm-yard, Lizzy ; over the gate ; never mind the cows ; they are quiet enough."—"I don't mind 'em," said Miss Lizzy, boldly and truly, and with a proud affronted air, displeased at being thought to mind any thing, and showing by her attitude and manner some design of proving her courage by an attack on the largest of the herd, in the shape of a pull by the tail. "I don't mind 'em."—"I know you don't, Lizzy ; but let them alone, and don't chase the turkey-cock. Come to me, my dear !" and, for a wonder, Lizzy came.

In the mean time, my other pet, Mayflower, had also gotten into a scrape. She had driven about a huge unwieldy sow, till the animal's grunting had disturbed the repose of a still more enormous Newfoundland dog, the guardian of the

yard. Out he sallied, growling, from the depth of his kennel, erecting his tail, and shaking his long chain. May's attention was instantly diverted from the sow to this new playmate, friend or foe, she cared not which ; and he of the kennel, seeing his charge unhurt, and out of danger, was at leisure to observe the charms of his fair enemy, as she frolicked round him, always beyond the reach of his chain, yet always with the natural instinctive coquetry of her sex, alluring him to the pursuit which she knew to be vain. I never saw a prettier flirtation. At last the noble animal, wearied out, retired to the inmost recesses of his habitation, and would not even approach her when she stood right before the entrance. " You are properly served, May. Come along, Lizzy. Across this wheat-field, and now over the gate. Stop ! let me lift you down. No jumping, no breaking of necks, Lizzy !" And here we are in the meadows, and out of the world. Robinson Crusoe, in his lonely island, had scarcely a more complete, or a more beautiful solitude.

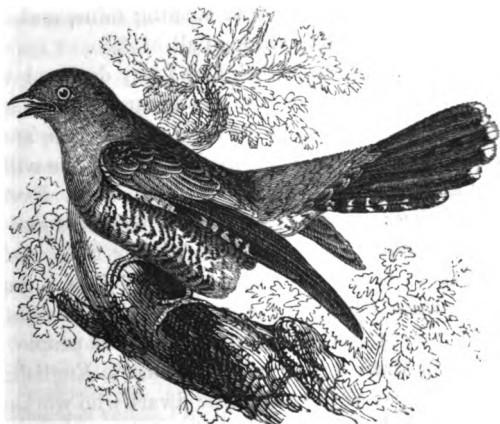
These meadows consist of a double row of small enclosures of rich grass-land, a mile or two in length, sloping down from high arable grounds on either side, to a little nameless brook that winds between them with a course which, in its infinite variety, clearness, and rapidity, seems to emulate the bold rivers of the north, of whom, far more than of our lazy southern streams, our rivulet presents a miniature likeness. Never was water more exquisitely tricky :—now darting over the bright pebbles, sparkling and flashing in the light with a bubbling music, as sweet and wild as the song of the woodlark ; now stretching quietly along, giving back the rich tufts of the golden marsh-marygolds which grow on its margin ; now sweeping round a fine reach of green grass, rising steeply into a high mound, a mimic promontory, whilst the other side sinks softly away, like some tiny bay, and the water flows between, so clear, so wide, so shallow, that Lizzy, longing for adventure, is sure she could cross unwetted ; now dashing through

two sand-banks, a torrent deep and narrow, which May clears at a bound; now sleeping, half-hidden, beneath the alders, and hawthorns, and wild roses, with which the banks are so profusely and variously fringed, whilst flags,* lilies, and other aquatic plants, almost cover the surface of the stream. In good truth, it is a beautiful brook, and one that Walton himself might have sitten by and loved, for trout are there; we see them as they dart up the stream, and hear and start at the sudden plunge when they spring to the surface for the summer flies. Izaak Walton would have loved our brook and our quiet meadows; they breathe the very spirit of his own peacefulness, a soothing quietude that sinks into the soul. There is no path through them, not one; we might wander a whole spring day, and not see a trace of human habitation. They belong to a number of small proprietors, who allow each other access through their respective grounds, from pure kindness and neighbourly feeling; a privilege never abused: and the fields on the other side of the water are reached by a rough plank, or a tree thrown across, or some such homely bridge. We ourselves possess one of the most beautiful; so that the strange pleasure of property, that instinct which makes Lizzy delight in her broken doll, and May in the bare bone which she has pilfered from the kennel of her recreant admirer of Newfound-

* Walking along these meadows one bright sunny afternoon, a year or two back, and rather later in the season, I had an opportunity of noticing a curious circumstance in natural history. Standing close to the edge of the stream, I remarked a singular appearance on a large tuft of flags. It looked like bunches of flowers, the leaves of which seemed dark, yet transparent, intermingled with brilliant tubes of bright blue or shining green. On examining this phenomenon more closely, it turned out to be several clusters of dragon-flies, just emerged from their deformed chrysalis state, and still torpid and motionless from the wetness of their filmy wings. Half an hour later we returned to the spot and they were gone. We had seen them at the very moment when beauty was complete and animation dormant. I have since found nearly a similar account of this curious process in Mr. Bingley's very entertaining work, called "Animal Biography."

land, is added to the other charms of this enchanting scenery ; a strange pleasure it is, when one so poor as I can feel it ! Perhaps it is felt most by the poor, with the rich it may be less intense—too much diffused and spread out, becoming thin by expansion, like leaf-gold ; the little of the poor may be not only more precious, but more pleasant to them : certain that bit of grassy and blossomy earth, with its green knolls and tufted bushes, its old pollards wreathed with ivy, and its bright and babbling waters, is very dear to me. But I must always have loved these meadows, so fresh, and cool, and delicious to the eye and to the tread, full of cowslips, and of all vernal flowers : Shakspeare's Song of Spring bursts irrepressibly from our lips as we step on them.

“ When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then on every tree—”



"Cuckoo ! cuckoo !" cried Lizzy, breaking in with her clear childish voice ; and immediately, as if at her call, the real bird, from a neighbouring tree, (for these meadows are dotted with timber like a park,) began to echo my lovely little girl, "cuckoo ! cuckoo !" I have a prejudice very unpastoral and unpoetical (but I cannot help it, I have many such) against this "harbinger of spring." His note is so monotonous, so melancholy ; and then the boys mimic him ; one hears "cuckoo ! cuckoo !" in dirty streets, amongst smoky houses, and the bird is hated for faults not his own. But prejudices of taste, likings and dislikings, are not always vanquishable by reason ; so, to escape the serenade from the tree, which promised to be of considerable duration, (when once that eternal song begins, on it goes ticking like a clock,)—to escape that noise I determined to excite another, and challenged Lizzy to a cowslip-gathering ; a trial of skill and speed, to see which should soonest fill her basket. My stratagem succeeded completely. What scrambling, what shouting, what glee from Lizzy ! twenty cuckoos might have sung unheard whilst she was pulling her own flowers, and stealing mine, and laughing, screaming, and talking through all.

At last the baskets were filled, and Lizzy declared victor : and down we sat, on the brink of the stream, under a spreading hawthorn, just disclosing its own pearly buds, and surrounded with the rich and enamelled flowers of the wild hyacinth, blue and white, to make our cowslip-ball. Every one knows the process : to nip off the tuft of flowerets just below the top of the stalk, and hang each cluster nicely balanced across a riband, till you have a long string like a garland ; then to press them closely together, and tie them tightly up. We went on very prosperously, *considering* ; as people say of a young lady's drawing, or a Frenchman's English, or a woman's tragedy, or of the poor little dwarf who works without fingers, or the ingenious sailor who writes with his toes, or generally of any performance which is accomplished by

means seemingly inadequate to its production. To be sure we met with a few accidents. First, Lizzy spoiled nearly all her cowslips by snapping them off too short ; so there was a fresh gathering ; in the next place May upset my full basket, and sent the blossoms floating, like so many fairy favours, down the brook ; then, when we were going on pretty steadily, just as we had made a superb wreath, and were thinking of tying it together, Lizzy, who held the riband, caught a glimpse of a gorgeous butterfly, all brown and red and purple, and skipping off to pursue the new object, let go her hold ; so all our treasures were abroad again. At last, however, by dint of taking a branch of alder as a substitute for Lizzy, and hanging the basket in a pollard-ash, out of sight of May, the cowslip-ball was finished. What a concentration of fragrance and beauty it was ! golden and sweet to satiety ! rich to sight, and touch, and smell ! Lizzy was enchanted, and ran off with her prize, hiding amongst the trees in the very coyness of ecstasy, as if any human eye, even mine, would be a restraint on her innocent raptures.

In the mean while I sat listening, not to my enemy the cuckoo, but to a whole concert of nightingales, scarcely interrupted by any meaner bird, answering and vying with each other in those short delicious strains which are to the ear as roses to the eye ; those snatches of lovely sound which come across us as airs from heaven. Pleasant thoughts, delightful associations, awoke as I listened ; and almost unconsciously I repeated to myself the beautiful story of the Lutist and the Nightingale, from Ford's *Lover's Melancholy*. Here it is. Is there in English poetry any thing finer ?

“ Passing from Italy to Greece, the tales
Which poets of an elder time have feign'd
To glorify their Tempe, bred in me
Desire of visiting Paradise.
To Thessaly I came, and living private,
Without acquaintance of more sweet companions

D

Than the old inmates to my love, my thoughts,
I day by day frequented silent groves
And solitary walks. One morning early
This accident encounter'd me : I heard
The sweetest and most ravishing contention
That art and nature ever were at strife in.
A sound of music touch'd mine ears, or rather
Indeed entranced my soul ; as I stole nearer,
Invited by the melody, I saw
This youth, this fair-faced youth, upon his lute
With strains of strange variety and harmony
Proclaiming, as it seem'd, so bold a challenge
To the clear choristers of the woods, the birds,
That as they flock'd about him, all stood silent,
Wondering at what they heard. I wonder'd too.
A nightingale,
Nature's best skill'd musician, undertakes
The challenge ; and for every several strain
The well-shaped youth could touch, she sang him down.
He could not run divisions with more art
Upon his quaking instrument than she,
The nightingale, did with her various notes
Reply to.
Some time thus spent, the young man grew at last
Into a pretty anger, that a bird,
Whom art had never taught cliffs, moods, or notes,
Should vie with him for mastery, whose study
Had busied many hours to perfect practice.
To end the controversy, in a rapture
Upon his instrument he plays so swiftly,
So many voluntaries, and so quick,
That there was curiosity and cunning,
Concord in discord, lines of differing method
Meeting in one full centre of delight.
The bird (ordain'd to be
Music's first martyr) strove to imitate
These several sounds ; which when her warbling throat
Fail'd in, for grief down dropt she on his lute,
And brake her heart. It was the quaintest sadness
To see the conqueror upon her hearse
To weep a funeral elegy of tears.
He look'd upon the trophies of his art,

Then sigh'd, then wiped his eyes; then sigh'd, and cry'd
'Alas! poor creature, I will soon revenge
This cruelty upon the author of it.
Henceforth this lute, guilty of innocent blood,
Shall never more betray a harmless peace
To an untimely end: ' and in that sorrow,
As he was pashing it against a tree,
I suddenly stept in."

When I had finished the recitation of this exquisite passage, the sky, which had been all the afternoon dull and heavy, began to look more and more threatening; darker clouds, like wreaths of black smoke, flew across the dead leaden tint; a cooler, damper air blew over the meadows, and a few large heavy drops splashed in the water. "We shall have a storm. Lizzy! May! where are ye? Quick, quick, my Lizzy! run, run! faster, faster!"

And off we ran; Lizzy not at all displeased at the thoughts of a wetting, to which indeed she is almost as familiar as a duck; May, on the other hand, peering up at the weather, and shaking her pretty ears with manifest dismay. Of all animals, next to a cat, a greyhound dreads rain. She might have escaped it; her light feet would have borne her home long before the shower; but May is too faithful for that, too true a comrade, understands too well the laws of good-fellowship; so she waited for us. She did, to be sure, gallop on before, and then stop and look back, and beckon as it were, with some scorn in her black eyes at the slowness of our progress. We in the mean while got on as fast as we could, encouraging and reproaching each other. "Faster, my Lizzy! Oh, what a bad runner!"—"Faster, faster! Oh, what a bad runner!" echoed my saucebox. "You are so fat, Lizzy, you make no way!"—"Ah! who else is fat?" retorted the darling. Certainly her mother is right; I do spoil that child.

By this time we were thoroughly soaked, all three. It was a pelting shower, that drove through our thin summer cloth-

ing and poor May's short glossy coat in a moment. And then, when we were wet to the skin, the sun came out, actually the sun, as if to laugh at our plight; and then, more provoking still, when the sun was shining, and the shower over, came a maid and a boy to look after us, loaded with cloaks and umbrellas enough to fence us against a whole day's rain. Never mind! on we go, faster and faster; Lizzy obliged to be most ignobly carried, having had the misfortune to lose a shoe in the mud, which we left the boy to look after.

Here we are at home—dripping; but glowing and laughing, and bearing our calamity most manfully. May, a dog of excellent sense, went instantly to bed in the stable, and is at this moment over head and ears in straw; Lizzy is gone to bed too, coaxed into that wise measure by a promise of tea and toast, and of not going home till to-morrow, and the story of Little Red Riding-Hood; and I am enjoying the luxury of dry clothing by a good fire. Really getting wet through now and then is no bad thing, finery apart; for one should not like spoiling a new pelisse, or a handsome plume; but when there is nothing in question but a white gown and a straw bonnet, as was the case to-day, it is rather pleasant than not. The little chill refreshes, and our enjoyment of the subsequent warmth and dryness is positive and absolute. Besides, the stimulus and exertion do good to the mind as well as body. How melancholy I was all the morning! how cheerful I am now! Nothing like a shower-bath—a real shower-bath, such as Lizzy and May and I have undergone, to cure low spirits. Try it, my dear readers, if ever ye be nervous—I will answer for its success.

THE HARD SUMMER.

AUGUST 15th.—Cold, cloudy, windy, wet. Here we are, in the midst of the dog-days, clustering merrily round the warm hearth like so many crickets, instead of chirruping in the

green fields like that other merry insect the grasshopper; shivering under the influence of the *Jupiter Pluvius* of England, the watery St. Swithin; peering at that scarce personage the sun, when he happens to make his appearance, as intently as astronomers look after a comet, or the common people stare at a balloon; exclaiming against the cold weather, just as we used to exclaim against the warm. "What a change from last year!" is the first sentence you hear, go where you may. Everybody remarks it, and everybody complains of it; and yet in my mind it has its advantages, or at least its compensations, as every thing in nature has, if we would only take the trouble to seek for them.

Last year, in spite of the love which we are now pleased to profess towards that ardent luminary, not one of the sun's numerous admirers had courage to look him in the face: there was no bearing the world till he had said "Good-night" to it. Then we might stir: then we began to wake and to live. All day long we languished under his influence in a strange dreaminess, too hot to work, too hot to read, too hot to write, too hot even to talk; sitting hour after hour in a green arbour, embowered in leafiness, letting thought and fancy float as they would. Those day-dreams were pretty things in their way; there is no denying that. But then, if one half of the world were to dream through a whole summer, like the sleeping Beauty in the wood, what would become of the other?

The only office requiring the slightest exertion, which I performed in that warm weather, was watering my flowers. Common sympathy called for that labour. The poor things withered, and faded, and pined away; they almost, so to say, panted for drought. Moreover, if I had not watered them myself, I suspect that no one else would; for water last year was nearly as precious hereabout as wine. Our land-springs were dried up; our wells were exhausted; our deep ponds were dwindling into mud; and geese, and ducks, and pigs, and laundresses, used to look with a jealous and suspicious eye

on the few and scanty half-buckets of that impure element, which my trusty lacquey was fain to filch for my poor geraniums and campanulas and tuberoses. We were forced to smuggle them in through my faithful adherent's territories, the stable, to avoid lectures within doors; and at last even that resource failed; my garden, my blooming garden, the joy of my eyes, was forced to go waterless like its neighbours, and became shrivelled, scorched, and sunburnt, like them. It really went to my heart to look at it.

On the other side of the house matters were still worse. What a dusty world it was, when about sunset we became cool enough to creep into it! Flowers in the court looking fit for a *hortus siccus*; mummies of plants, dried as in an oven; hollyhocks, once pink, turned into Quakers; cloves smelling of dust. Oh dusty world! May herself looked of that complexion; so did Lizzy; so did all the houses, windows, chickens, children, trees, and pigs in the village; so above all did the shoes. No foot could make three plunges into that abyss of pulverized gravel, which had the impudence to call itself a hard road, without being clothed with a coat a quarter of an inch thick. Woe to white gowns! woe to black! Drab was your only wear.

Then, when we were out of the street, what a toil it was to mount the hill, climbing with weary steps and slow upon the brown turf by the way-side, slippery, hot, and hard as a rock! And then if we happened to meet a carriage coming along the middle of the road,—the bottomless middle,—what a sandy whirlwind it was! What choking! what suffocation! No state could be more pitiable, except indeed that of the travellers who carried this misery about with them. I shall never forget the plight in which we met the coach one evening in last August, full an hour after its time, steeds and driver, carriage, and passengers, all one dust. The outsides, and the horses, and the coachman, seemed reduced to a torpid quietness, the resignation of despair. They had left off trying to

better their condition, and taken refuge in a wise and patient hopelessness, bent to endure in silence the extremity of ill. The six insides, on the contrary, were still fighting against their fate, vainly struggling to ameliorate their hapless destiny. They were visibly grumbling at the weather, scolding at the dust, and heating themselves like a furnace, by striving against the heat. How well I remember the fat gentleman without his coat, who was wiping his forehead, heaving up his wig, and certainly uttering that English ejaculation, which, to our national reproach, is the phrase of our language best known on the continent. And that poor boy, red-hot, all in a flame, whose mamma, having divested her own person of all superfluous apparel, was trying to relieve his sufferings by the removal of his neckerchief—an operation which he resisted with all his might. How perfectly I remember him, as well as the pale girl who sat opposite, fanning herself with her bonnet into an absolute fever! They vanished after a while into their own dust; but I have them all before my eyes at this moment, a companion picture to Hogarth's *Afternoon*, a standing lesson to the grumblers at cold summers.

For my part, I really like this wet season. It keeps us within, to be sure, rather more than is quite agreeable; but then we are at least awake and alive there, and the world out of doors is so much the pleasanter when we can get abroad. Every thing does well, except those fastidious bipeds, men and women; corn ripens, grass grows, fruit is plentiful; there is no lack of birds to eat it, and there has not been such a wasp-season these dozen years. My garden wants no watering, and is more beautiful than ever, beating my old rival in that primitive art, the pretty wife of the little mason, out and out. Measured with mine, her flowers are nought. Look at those hollyhocks, like pyramids of roses; those garlands of the convolvulus major of all colours, hanging around that tall pole, like the wreathy hop-bine; those magnificent dusky cloves, breathing of the Spice Islands; those flaunting double

dahlias ; those splendid scarlet geraniums, and those fierce and warlike flowers the tiger-lilies. Oh how beautiful they are ! Besides, the weather clears sometimes—it has cleared this evening ; and here are we, after a merry walk up the hill, almost-as quick as in the winter, bounding lightly along the bright green turf of the pleasant common, enticed by the gay shouts of a dozen clear young voices, to linger awhile, and see the boys play at cricket.

I plead guilty to a strong partiality towards that unpopular class of beings, country-boys : I have a large acquaintance amongst them, and I can almost say, that I know good of many and harm of none. In general they are an open, spirited, good-humoured race, with a proneness to embrace the pleasures and eschew the evils of their condition, a capacity for happiness, quite unmatched in man, or woman, or girl. They are patient, too, and bear their fate as scape-goats, (for all sins whatsoever are laid as matters of course to their door,) whether at home or abroad, with amazing resignation ; and, considering the many lies of which they are the objects, they tell wonderfully few in return. The worst that can be said of them is, that they seldom, when grown to man's estate, keep the promise of their boyhood ; but that is a fault to come—a fault that may not come, and ought not to be anticipated. It is astonishing how sensible they are to notice from their betters, or those whom they think such. I do not speak of money, or gifts, or praise, or the more coarse and common briberies—they are more delicate courtiers ; a word, a nod, a smile, or the mere calling of them by their names, is enough to insure their hearts and their services. Half-a-dozen of them, poor urchins, have run away now to bring us chairs from their several homes. “Thank you, Joe Kirby !—you are always first—yes, that is just the place—I shall see every thing there. Have you been in yet, Joe ?”—“No, ma'am ! I go in next.”—“Ah, I am glad of that—and now's the time. Really that was a pretty ball of Jem Eusden's !—I was sure it would

go to the wicket. Run, Joe! They are waiting for you." There was small need to bid Joe Kirby make haste; I think he is, next to a race-horse, or a greyhound, or a deer, the fastest creature that runs—the most completely alert and active. Joe is mine especial friend, and leader of the "tender juveniles," as Joel Brent is of the adults. In both instances this post of honour was gained by merit, even more remarkably so in Joe's case than in Joel's; for Joe is a less boy than many of his companions, (some of whom are fifteeners and sixteeners, quite as tall and nearly as old as Tom Coper,) and a poorer than all, as may be conjectured from the lamentable state of that patched round frock, and the ragged condition of those unpatched shoes, which would encumber, if any thing could, the light feet that wear them. But why should I lament the poverty that never troubles him? Joe is the merriest and happiest creature that ever lived twelve years in this wicked world. Care cannot come near him. He hath a perpetual smile on his round ruddy face, and a laugh in his hazel eye, that drives the witch away. He works at yonder farm on the top of the hill, where he is in such repute for intelligence and good-humour, that he has the honour of performing all the errands of the house, of helping the maid, the mistress, and the master, in addition to his own stated office of carter's boy. There he works hard from five till seven, and then he comes here to work still harder, under the name of play—batting, bowling, and fielding, as if for life, filling the place of four boys; being, at a pinch, a whole eleven. The late Mr. Knyvett, the king's organist, who used in his own person to sing twenty parts at once of the hallelujah chorus, so that you would have thought he had a nest of nightingales in his throat, was but a type of Joe Kirby. There is a sort of ubiquity about him; he thinks nothing of being in two places at once, and for pitching a ball, William Grey himself is nothing to him. It goes straight to the mark like a bullet. He is king of the cricketers from eight to sixteen, both inclu-

sive, and an excellent ruler he makes. Nevertheless, in the best-ordered states there will be grumblers, and we have an opposition here in the shape of Jem Eusden.

Jem Eusden is a stunted lad of thirteen, or thereabout, lean, small, and short, yet strong and active. His face is of an extraordinary ugliness, colourless, withered, haggard, with a look of extreme age, much increased by hair so light that it might rather pass for white than flaxen. He is constantly arrayed in the blue cap and old-fashioned coat, the costume of an endowed school to which he belongs; where he sits still all day, and rushes into the field at night, fresh, untired, and ripe for action, to scold, and brawl, and storm, and bluster. He hates Joe Kirby, whose immoveable good-humour, broad smiles, and knowing nods, must certainly be very provoking to so fierce and turbulent a spirit; and he has himself (being, except by rare accident, no great player) the preposterous ambition of wishing to be manager of the sports. In short, he is a demagogue in embryo, with every quality necessary to a splendid success in that vocation,—a strong voice, a fluent utterance, an incessant iteration, and a frontless impudence. He is a great “scholar” too, to use the country phrase; his “piece,” as our village schoolmaster terms a fine sheet of flourishing writing, something between a valentine and a sampler, enclosed within a border of little coloured prints—his last, I remember, was encircled by an engraved history of Moses, beginning at the finding in the bulrushes, with Pharaoh’s daughter dressed in a rose-coloured gown and blue feathers—his piece is not only the admiration of the school, but of the parish, and is sent triumphantly round from house to house at Christmas, to extort halfpence and sixpences from all encouragers of learning—*Montem* in miniature. The Mosaic history was so successful, that the produce enabled Jem to purchase a bat and ball, which, besides adding to his natural arrogance, (for the little pedant actually began to mutter against being eclipsed by a dunce, and went so far as to chal-

lenge Joe Kirby to a trial in Practice, or the Rule of Three,) gave him, when compared with the general poverty, a most unnatural preponderance in the cricket state. He had the ways and means in his hands—for alas! the hard winter had made sad havoc among the bats, and the best ball was a bad one—he had the ways and means, could withhold the supplies, and his party was beginning to wax strong, when Joe received a present of two bats and a ball for the youngsters in general, and himself in particular—and Jem's adherents left him on the spot—they ratted, to a man, that very evening. Notwithstanding this desertion, their forsaken leader has in nothing relaxed from his pretensions, or his ill-humour. He still quarrels and brawls as if he had a faction to back him, and thinks nothing of contending with both sides, the ins and the outs, secure of out-talking the whole field. He has been squabbling these ten minutes, and is just marching off now with his own bat (he has never deigned to use one of Joe's) in his hand. What an ill-conditioned hobgoblin it is! And yet there is something bold and sturdy about him too. I should miss Jem Eusden.

Ah, there is another deserter from the party! my friend the little hussar—I do not know his name, and call him after his cap and jacket. He is a very remarkable person, about the age of eight years, the youngest piece of gravity and dignity I ever encountered; short, and square, and upright, and slow, with a fine bronzed flat visage, resembling those convertible signs the Broad-Face and the Saracen's-Head, which, happening to be next-door neighbours in the town of B., I never know apart, resembling, indeed, any face that is open-eyed and immoveable, the very sign of a boy! He stalks about with his hands in his breeches pocket, like a piece of machinery; sits leisurely down when he ought to field, and never gets farther in batting than to stop the ball. His is the only voice never heard in the *mêlée*: I doubt, indeed, if he have one, which may be partly the reason of a circumstance that I re-

cord to his honour, his fidelity to Jem Eusden, to whom he has adhered through every change of fortune, with a tenacity proceeding perhaps from an instinctive consciousness that the loquacious leader talks enough for two. He is the only thing resembling a follower that our demagogue possesses, and is cherished by him accordingly. Jem quarrels for him, scolds for him, pushes for him; and but for Joe Kirby's invincible good-humour, and a just discrimination of the innocent from the guilty, the activity of Jem's friendship would get the poor hussar ten drubbings a day.

But it is growing late. The sun has set a long time. Only see what a gorgeous colouring has spread itself over those parting masses of clouds in the west,—what a train of rosy light! We shall have a fine sunshiny day to-morrow,—a blessing not to be undervalued, in spite of my late vituperation of heat. Shall we go home now? And shall we take the longest but prettiest road, that by the green lanes? This way, to the left, round the corner of the common, past Mr. Welles's cottage, and our path lies straight before us. How snug and comfortable that cottage looks! Its little yard all alive with the cow, and the mare, and the colt almost as large as the mare, and the young foal, and the great yard-dog, all so fat! Fenced in with hay-rick, and wheat-rick, and bean-stack, and backed by the long garden, the spacious drying-ground, the fine orchard, and that large field quartered into four different crops. How comfortable this cottage looks, and how well the owners earn their comforts! They are the most prosperous pair in the parish—she a laundress with twenty times more work than she can do, unrivalled in flounces and shirt-frills, and such delicacies of the craft; he, partly a farmer, partly a farmer's man, tilling his own ground, and then tilling other people's;—affording a proof, even in this declining age, when the circumstances of so many worthy members of the community seem to have “an alacrity in sinking,” that it is possible to amend them by sheer industry. He, who was

born in the workhouse, and bred up as a parish boy, has now, by mere manual labour, risen to the rank of a land-owner, pays rates and taxes, grumbles at the times, and is called Master Welles,—the title next to Mister—that by which Shakspeare was called;—what would man have more? His wife, besides being the best laundress in the county, is a comely woman still. There she stands at the spring, dipping up water for to-morrow,—the clear, deep, silent spring, which sleeps so peacefully under its high flowery bank, red with the tall spiral stalks of the foxglove and their rich pendent bells, blue with the beautiful forget-me-not, that gem-like blossom, which looks like a living jewel of turquoise and topaz. It is almost too late to see its beauty; and here is the pleasant shady lane, where the high elms will shut out the little twilight that remains. Ah, but we shall have the fairies' lamps to guide us, the stars of the earth, the glow-worms! Here they are, three almost together. Do you not see them? One seems tremulous, vibrating, as if on the extremity of a leaf of grass; the others are deeper in the hedge, in some green cell on which their light falls with an emerald lustre. I hope my friends the cricketers will not come this way home. I would not have the pretty creatures removed for more than I care to say, and in this matter I would hardly trust Joe Kirby—boys so love to stick them in their hats. But this lane is quite deserted. It is only a road from field to field. No one comes here at this hour. They are quite safe; and I shall walk here to-morrow and visit them again. And now, good night! beautiful insects, lamps of the fairies, good night!

NUTTING.

SEPTEMBER 26th.—One of those delicious autumnal days, when the air, the sky, and the earth seem lulled into a universal calm, softer and milder even than May. We sallied

forth for a walk, in a mood congenial to the weather and the season, avoiding, by mutual consent, the bright and sunny common, and the gay high-road, and stealing through shady, unfrequented lanes, where we were not likely to meet any one,—not even the pretty family procession which in other years we used to contemplate with so much interest—the father, mother, and children, returning from the wheat-field, the little ones laden with bristling close-tied bunches of wheat-ears, their own gleanings, or a bottle and a basket which had contained their frugal dinner, whilst the mother would carry her babe hushing and lulling it, and the father and an elder child trudged after with the cradle, all seeming weary, and all happy. We shall not see such a procession as this to-day ; for the harvest is nearly over, the fields are deserted, the silence may almost be felt. Except the wintry notes of the red-breast, nature herself is mute. But how beautiful, how gentle, how harmonious, how rich ! The rain has preserved to the herbage all the freshness and verdure of spring, and the world of leaves has lost nothing of its midsummer brightness, and the hare-bell is on the banks, and the woodbine in the hedges, and the low furze, which the lambs cropped in the spring, has burst again into its golden blossoms.

All is beautiful that the eye can see ; perhaps the more beautiful for being shut in with a forest-like closeness. We have no prospect in this labyrinth of lanes, cross-roads, mere cart-ways, leading to the innumerable little farms into which this part of the parish is divided. Up-hill or down, these quiet woody lanes scarcely give us a peep at the world, except when, leaning over a gate, we look into one of the small enclosures, hemmed in with hedge-rows, so closely set with growing timber, that the meady opening looks almost like a glade in a wood ; or when some cottage, planted at a corner of one of the little greens formed by the meeting of these cross-ways, almost startles us by the unexpected sight of the dwellings of men in such a solitude. But that we have more of hill and

dale, and that our cross-roads are excellent in their kind, this side of our parish would resemble the description given of *La Vendée*, in *Madame Laroche-Jacquelin's* most interesting book.* I am sure if wood can entitle a country to be called *Le Bocage*, none can have a better right to the name. Even this pretty snug farm-house on the hill-side, with its front covered with the rich vine, which goes wreathing up to the very top of the clustered chimney, and its sloping orchard full of fruit—even this pretty quiet nest can hardly peep out of its leaves. Ah! they are gathering in the orchard harvest. Look at that young rogue in the old mossy apple-tree—that great tree, bending with the weight of its golden-rennets—see how he pelts his little sister beneath with apples as red and as round as her own cheeks, while she, with her outstretched frock, is trying to catch them, and laughing and offering to pelt again as often as one bobs against her; and look at that still younger imp, who, as grave as a judge, is creeping on hands and knees under the tree, picking up the apples as they fall so deedly,† and depositing them so honestly in the great basket on the grass, already fixed so firmly and opened so widely, and filled almost to overflowing by the brown rough fruitage of the golden-rennet's next neighbour the russeting; and see that smallest urchin of all, seated apart in infantine state on the turfy bank, with that toothsome piece of deformity a crumpling in each hand now biting from one sweet, hard, juicy morsel and now from another.—Is not that a pretty English

* An almost equally interesting account of that very peculiar and interesting scenery, may be found in "*The Maid of La Vendée*," an English novel, remarkable for its simplicity and truth of painting, written by Mrs. Le Noir, the daughter of Christopher Smart, an inheritrix of much of his talent. Her works deserve to be better known.

† "Deedly,"—I am not quite sure that this word is good English; but it is genuine Hampshire, and is used by the most correct of female writers, Miss Austen. It means (and it is no small merit that it has no exact synonyme) any thing done with a profound and plodding attention, an action which engrosses all the powers of mind and body.

picture? And then, farther up the orchard, that bold hardy lad, the eldest-born, who has scaled (Heaven knows how!) the tall, straight upper branch of that great pear-tree, and is sitting there as securely and as fearlessly, in as much real safety and apparent danger, as a sailor on the top-mast. Now he shakes the tree with a mighty swing that brings down a pelting shower of stony bergamots, which the father gathers rapidly up, whilst the mother can hardly assist for her motherly fear—a fear which only spurs the spirited boy to bolder ventures. Is not that a pretty picture? And they are such a handsome family too, the Brookers. I do not know that there is any gipsy blood, but there is the true gipsy complexion, richly brown, with cheeks and lips so deeply red, black hair curling close to their heads in short crisp rings, white shining teeth—and such eyes!—That sort of beauty entirely eclipses your mere roses and lilies. Even Lizzy, the prettiest of fair children, would look poor and watery by the side of Willy Brooker, the sober little personage who is picking up the apples with his small chubby hands, and filling the basket so orderly, next to his father the most useful man in the field. “Willy!” He hears without seeing; for we are quite hidden by the high bank, and a spreading hawthorn bush that overtops it, though between the lower branches and the grass we have found a convenient peep-hole. “Willy!” The voice sounds to him like some fairy dream, and the black eyes are raised from the ground with sudden wonder, the long silky eyelashes thrown back till they rest on the delicate brow, and a deeper blush is burning on those dark cheeks, and a smile is dimpling about those scarlet lips. But the voice is silent now, and the little quiet boy, after a moment’s pause, is gone coolly to work again. He is indeed a most lovely child. I think some day or other he must marry Lizzy; I shall propose the match to their respective mammas. At present the parties are rather too young for a wedding—the intended bridegroom being, as I should judge, six, or thereabout, and the fair bride

barely five,—but at least we might have a betrothment after the royal fashion,—there could be no harm in that. Miss Lizzy, I have no doubt, would be as demure and coquettish as if ten winters more had gone over her head, and poor Willy would open his innocent black eyes, and wonder what was going forward. They would be the very Oberon and Titania of the village, the fairy king and queen.

Ah ! here is the hedge along which the periwinkle wreathes and twines so profusely, with its ever-green leaves shining like the myrtle, and its starry blue flowers. It is seldom found wild in this part of England ; but, when we do meet with it, it is so abundant and so welcome,—the very robin-redbreast of flowers, a winter friend. Unless in those unfrequent frosts which destroy all vegetation, it blossoms from September to June, surviving the last lingering crane's-bill, forerunning the earliest primrose, hardier even than the mountain daisy,—peeping out from beneath the snow, looking at itself in the ice, smiling through the tempests of life, and yet welcoming and enjoying the sun-beams. Oh, to be like that flower !

The little spring that has been bubbling under the hedge all along the hill-side, begins, now that we have mounted the eminence and are imperceptibly descending, to deviate into a capricious variety of clear deep pools and channels, so narrow and so choked with weeds, that a child might overstep them. The hedge has also changed its character. It is no longer the close compact vegetable wall of hawthorn, and maple, and brier-roses, intertwined with bramble and woodbine, and crowned with large elms or thickly-set saplings. No ! the pretty meadow which rises high above us, backed and almost surrounded by a tall coppice, needs no defence on our side but its own steep bank, garnished with tufts of broom, with pollard oaks wreathed with ivy, and here and there with long patches of hazel overhanging the water. “ Ah, there are still nuts on that bough ! ” and in an instant my dear companion, active and eager and delighted as a boy, has hooked down

with his walking-stick one of the lissome hazel stalks, and cleared it of its tawny clusters, and in another moment he has mounted the bank, and is in the midst of the nuttery, now transferring the spoil from the lower branches into that vast variety of pockets which gentlemen carry about them, now bending the tall tops into the lane, holding them down by



main force, so that I might reach them and enjoy the pleasure of collecting some of the plunder myself. A very great pleasure he knew it would be. I doffed my shawl, tucked up my flounces, turned my straw bonnet into a basket, and began gathering and scrambling—for, manage it how you may, nutting is scrambling work,—those boughs, however tightly you may grasp them by the young fragrant twigs and the bright green leaves, will recoil and burst away; but there is a pleasure even in that: so on we go, scrambling and gathering with all our might and all our glee. Oh what an enjoyment! All my life long I have had a passion for that sort of seeking which implies finding, (the secret, I believe, of the love of field-sports, which is in man's mind a natural impulse,)—therefore I love violeting,—therefore, when we had a fine garden, I used to love to gather strawberries, and cut asparagus, and, above all, to collect the filberts from the shrubberies: but this hedge-row nutting beats that sport all to nothing.

That was a make-believe thing, compared with this ; there was no surprise, no suspense, no unexpectedness—it was as inferior to this wild nutting, as the turning out of a bag-fox is to unearthing the fellow, in the eyes of a staunch fox-hunter.

Oh what enjoyment this nut-gathering is ! They are in such abundance, that it seems as if there were not a boy in the parish, nor a young man, nor a young woman,—for a basket of nuts is the universal tribute of country gallantry ; our pretty damsel Harriet has had at least half-a-dozen this season ; but no one has found out these. And they are so full too, we lose half of them from over-ripeness ; they drop from the socket at the slightest motion. If we lose, there is one who finds. May is as fond of nuts as a squirrel, and cracks the shell and extracts the kernel with equal dexterity. Her white glossy head is upturned now to watch them as they fall. See how her neck is thrown back like that of a swan, and how beautifully her folded ears quiver with expectation, and how her quick eye follows the rustling noise, and her light feet dance and pat the ground, and leap up with eagerness, seeming almost sustained in the air, just as I have seen her when Brush is beating a hedge-row, and she knows from his questing that there is a hare afoot. See, she has caught that nut just before it touched the water ; but the water would have been no defence,—she fishes them from the bottom, she delves after them amongst the matted grass—even my bonnet—how beggingly she looks at that ! “Oh what a pleasure nutting is !—Is it not, May ? But the pockets are almost full, and so is the basket-bonnet, and that bright watch the sun says it is late ; and after all it is wrong to rob the poor boys—is it not, May ?”—May shakes her graceful head denyingly, as if she understood the question—“And we must go home now—must we not ? But we will come nutting again some time or other—shall we not, my May ?”

THE VISIT.

OCTOBER 27th.—A lovely autumnal day ; the air soft, balmy, genial ; the sky of that softened and delicate blue upon which the eye loves to rest,—the blue which gives such relief to the rich beauty of the earth, all around glowing in the ripe and mellow tints of the most gorgeous of the seasons. Really such an autumn may well compensate our English climate for the fine spring of the south, that spring of which the poets talk, but which we so seldom enjoy. Such an autumn glows upon us like a splendid evening ; it is the very sunset of the year ; and I have been tempted forth into a wider range of enjoyment than usual. This *walk* (if I may use the Irish figure of speech called a bull) will be a *ride*. A very dear friend has beguiled me into accompanying her in her pretty equipage to her beautiful home, four miles off ; and having sent forward in the style of a running footman the servant who had driven her, she assumes the reins, and off we set.

My fair companion is a person whom nature and fortune would have spoiled if they could. She is one of those striking women whom a stranger cannot pass without turning to look again ; tall and finely proportioned, with a bold Roman contour of figure and feature, a delicate English complexion, and an air of distinction altogether her own. Her beauty is duchess-like. She seems born to wear feathers and diamonds, and to form the grace and ornament of a court ; and the noble frankness and simplicity of her countenance and manner confirm the impression. Destiny has, however, dealt more kindly by her. She is the wife of a rich country gentleman of high descent and higher attainments, to whom she is most devotedly attached,—the mother of a little girl as lovely as herself, and the delight of all who have the happiness of her acquaintance, to whom she is endeared not merely by her remarkable sweetness of temper and kindness of heart, but by the singular in-

genuousness and openness of character which communicate an indescribable charm to her conversation. She is as transparent as water. You may see every colour, every shade of a mind as lofty and beautiful as her person. Talking with her is like being in the Palace of Truth described by Madame de Genlis ; and yet so kindly are her feelings, so great her indulgence to the little failings and foibles of our common nature, so intense her sympathy with the wants, the wishes, the sorrows, and the happiness of her fellow-creatures, that, with all her frank-speaking, I never knew her make an enemy or lose a friend.

But we must get on. What would she say if she knew I was putting her into print ? We must get on up the hill. Ah ! that is precisely what we are not likely to do ! This horse, this beautiful and high-bred horse, well fed, and fat and glossy, who stood prancing at our gate like an Arabian, has suddenly turned sulky. He does not indeed stand quite still, but his way of moving is little better—the slowest and most sullen of all walks. Even they who ply the hearse at funerals, sad-looking beasts who totter under black feathers, go faster. It is of no use to admonish him by whip, or rein, or word. The rogue has found out, that it is a weak and tender hand that guides him now. Oh, for one pull, one stroke of his old driver the groom ! How he would fly ! But there is the groom half-a-mile before us, out of ear-shot, clearing the ground at a capital rate, beating us hollow. He has just turned the top of the hill ;—and in a moment—ay, *now* he is out of sight, and will undoubtedly so continue till he meets us at the lawn gate. Well ! there is no great harm. It is only prolonging the pleasure of enjoying together this charming scenery in this fine weather. If once we make up our minds not to care how slowly our steed goes, not to fret ourselves by vain exertions, it is no matter what his pace may be. There is little doubt of his getting home by sunset, and that will content us. He is, after all, a fine noble animal ; and perhaps

when he finds that we are determined to give him his way, he may relent and give us ours. All his sex are sticklers for dominion, though, when it is undisputed, some of them are generous enough to abandon it. Two or three of the most discreet wives of my acquaintance contrive to manage their husbands sufficiently with no better secret than this seeming submission; and in our case the example has the more weight since we have no possible way of helping ourselves.

Thus philosophizing, we reached the top of the hill, and viewed with "reverted eyes" the beautiful prospect that lay bathed in golden sunshine behind us. Cowper says, with that boldness of expressing in poetry the commonest and simplest feelings, which is perhaps one great secret of his originality,

"Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily seen,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years."

Every day I walk up this hill—every day I pause at the top to admire the broad winding road with the green waste on each side, uniting it with the thickly timbered hedge-rows; the two pretty cottages at unequal distances, placed so as to mark the bends; the village beyond, with its mass of roofs and clustered chimneys peeping through the trees; and the rich distance, where cottages, mansions, churches, towns, seem embowered in some wide forest, and shut in by blue shadowy hills. Every day I admire this most beautiful landscape; yet never did it seem to me so fine or so glowing as now. All the tints of the glorious autumn, orange, tawny, yellow, red, are poured in profusion among the bright greens of the meadows and turnip fields, till the eyes are satiated with colour; and then before us we have the common with its picturesque roughness of surface tufted with cottages, dappled with water, edging off on one side into fields and farms and orchards, and terminated on the other by the princely oak avenue. What a richness and variety the wild broken ground gives to the luxuriant cultivation of

the rest of the landscape! Cowper has described it for me. How perpetually, as we walk in the country, his vivid pictures recur to the memory! Here is his common and mine!

“ The common overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deform'd
And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold :—

Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets."

The description is exact. There, too, to the left is my cricket-ground ; (Cowper's common wanted that finishing grace ;) and there stands one solitary urchin, as if in contemplation of its past and future glories ; for, alas ! cricket is over for the season. Ah ! it is Ben Kirby, next brother to Joe, king of the youngsters, and probably his successor—for this Michaelmas has cost us Joe ! He is promoted from the farm to the mansion-house, two miles off ; there he cleans shoes, rubs knives, and runs on errands, and is, as his mother expresses it, “ a sort of 'prentice to the footman.” I should not wonder if Joe, some day or other, should overtop the footman, and rise to be butler ; and his splendid prospects must be our consolation for the loss of this great favourite. In the mean time we have Ben.

Ben Kirby is a year younger than Joe, and the schoolfellow and rival of Jem Eusden. To be sure his abilities lie in rather a different line: Jem is a scholar, Ben is a wag: Jem is great in figures and writing, Ben in faces and mischief. His master says of him, that, if there were two such in the school, he must resign his office; and, as far as my observation goes, the worthy pedagogue is right. Ben is, it must be confessed, a great corrupter of gravity. He hath an exceeding aversion to authority and decorum, and a wonderful boldness and dexterity in overthrowing the one and puzzling the other. His contortions of visage are astounding. His "power over

his own muscles and those of other people" is almost equal to that of Liston; and indeed the original face, flat and square and Chinese in its shape, of a fine tan complexion, with a snub nose, and a slit for a mouth, is nearly as comical as that matchless performer's. When aided by Ben's singular mobility of feature, his knowing winks and grins and shrugs and nods, together with a certain dry shrewdness, a habit of saying sharp things, and a marvellous gift of impudence, it forms as fine a specimen as possible of a humorous country boy, an oddity in embryo. Every body likes Ben, except his butts; (which may perhaps comprise half his acquaintance;) and of them no one so thoroughly hates and dreads him as our parish schoolmaster, a most worthy King Log, whom Ben dumbfounds twenty times a day. He is a great ornament of the cricket-ground, has a real genius for the game, and displays it after a very original manner, under the disguise of awkwardness—as the clown shows off his agility in a pantomime. Nothing comes amiss to him. By the bye, he would have been the very lad for us in our present dilemma; not a horse in England could master Ben Kirby. But we are too far from him now—and perhaps it is as well that we are so. I believe the rogue has a kindness for me, in remembrance of certain apples and nuts, which my usual companion, who delights in his wit, is accustomed to dole out to him. But it is a Robin Goodfellow nevertheless, a perfect Puck, that loves nothing on earth so well as mischief. Perhaps the horse may be the safer conductor of the two.

The avenue is quite alive to-day. Old women are picking up twigs and acorns, and pigs of all sizes doing their utmost to spare them the latter part of the trouble; boys and girls groping for beech-nuts under yonder clump; and a group of younger elves collecting as many dead leaves as they can find to feed the bonfire which is smoking away so briskly amongst the trees,—a sort of rehearsal of the grand bonfire nine days hence; of the loyal conflagration of the arch traitor Guy

Vaux, which is annually solemnized in the avenue, accompanied with as much of squibbery and crackery as our boys can beg or borrow—not to say steal. Ben Kirby is a great man on the 5th of November. All the savings of a month, the hoarded halfpence, the new farthings, the very luck-penny, go off *in fumo* on that night. For my part, I like this day-light mockery better. There is no gunpowder—odious gunpowder! no noise but the merry shouts of the small fry, so shrill and happy, and the cawing of the rooks, who are wheeling in large circles overhead, and wondering what is going forward in their territory—seeming in their loud clamour to ask what that light smoke may mean that curls so prettily amongst their old oaks, towering as if to meet the clouds. There is something very intelligent in the ways of that black people the rooks, particularly in their wonder. I suppose it results from their numbers and their unity of purpose, a sort of collective and corporate wisdom. Yet geese congregate also; and geese never by any chance look wise. But then geese are a domestic fowl; we have spoiled them; and rooks are free commoners of nature, who use the habitations we provide for them, tenant our groves and our avenues, but never dream of becoming our subjects.

What a labyrinth of a road this is! I do think there are four turnings in the short half-mile between the avenue and the mill. And what a pity, as my companion observes—not that our good and jolly miller, the very representative of the Old English yeomanry, should be so rich, but that one consequence of his riches should be the pulling down of the prettiest old mill that ever looked at itself in the Loddon, with the picturesque, low-browed, irregular cottage, which stood with its light-pointed roof, its clustered chimneys, and its ever-open door, looking like the real abode of comfort and hospitality, to build this huge, staring, frightful, red-brick mill, as ugly as a manufactory, and this great square house, ugly and red to-match, just behind. The old buildings always used to remind

me of Wollett's beautiful engraving of a scene in the Maid of the Mill. It will be long before any artist will make a drawing of this. Only think of this redness in a picture ! this boiled lobster of a house ! Falstaff's description of Bardolph's nose would look pale in the comparison.

Here is that monstrous machine of a tilted waggon, with its load of flour, and its four fat horses. I wonder whether our horse will have the decency to get out of the way. If he does not, I am sure we cannot make him ; and that enormous ship upon wheels, that ark on dry land, would roll over us like the car of Juggernaut. Really—Oh no ! there is no danger now. I should have remembered that it is my friend Samuel Long who drives the mill-team. He will take care of us. "Thank you, Samuel !" And Samuel has put us on our way, steered us safely past his waggon, escorted us over the bridge ; and now, having seen us through our immediate difficulties, has parted from us with a very civil bow and good-humoured smile, as one who is always civil and good-humoured, but with a certain triumphant masterful look in his eyes, which I have noted in men, even the best of them, when a woman gets into straits by attempting manly employments. He has done us great good though, and may be allowed his little feeling of superiority. The parting salute he bestowed on our steed, in the shape of an astounding crack of his huge whip, has put that refractory animal on his mettle. On we go ! past the glazier's pretty house, with its porch and its filbert walk ; along the narrow lane bordered with elms, whose fallen leaves have made the road one yellow ; past that little farm-house with the horse-chestnut trees before, glowing like oranges ; past the white-washed school on the other side, gay with October roses ; past the park, and the lodge, and the mansion, where once dwelt the great earl of Clarendon ;—and now the rascal has begun to discover that Samuel Long and his whip are a mile off, and that his mistress is driving him, and he slackens his pace accordingly. Perhaps he feels the beauty of the road just here,

and goes slowly to enjoy it. Very beautiful it certainly is. The park paling forms the boundary on one side, with fine clumps of oak, and deer in all attitudes; the water, tufted with alders, flowing along on the other. Another turn, and the water winds away, succeeded by a low hedge, and a sweep of green meadows: whilst the park and its paling are replaced by a steep bank, on which stands a small, quiet, village ale-house; and higher up, embosomed in wood, is the little country church, with its sloping church-yard and its low white steeple, peeping out from amongst magnificent yew-trees:

“Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and invet'rately convolved.”

WORDSWORTH.

No village church was ever more happily placed. It is the very image of the peace and humbleness inculcated within its walls.

Ah! here is a higher hill rising before us, almost like a mountain. How grandly the view opens as we ascend over that wild bank, overgrown with fern, and heath, and gorse, and between those tall hollies, glowing with their coral berries! What an expanse! But we have little time to gaze at present; for that piece of perversity, our horse, who has walked over so much level ground, has now, inspired, I presume, by a desire to revisit his stable, taken it into that unaccountable noddle of his to trot up this, the very steepest hill in the county. Here we are on the top; and in five minutes we have reached the lawn gate, and are in the very midst of that beautiful piece of art or nature, (I do not know to which class it belongs,) the pleasure-ground of F. Hill. Never was the “prophetic eye of taste” exerted with more magical skill than in these plantations. Thirty years ago this place had no existence; it was a mere undistinguished tract of field and meadow and common land; now it is a mimic forest, delight-

ing the eye with the finest combinations of trees and shrubs, the rarest effects of form and foliage, and bewildering the mind with its green glades, and impervious recesses, and apparently interminable extent. It is the triumph of landscape gardening, and never more beautiful than in this autumn sunset, lighting up the ruddy beech and the spotted sycamore, and gilding the shining fir-cones that hang so thickly amongst the dark pines. The robins are singing around us, as if they too felt the magic of the hour. How gracefully the road winds through the leafy labyrinth, leading imperceptibly to the more ornamented sweep. Here we are at the door amidst geraniums, and carnations, and jasmines, still in flower. Ah! here is a flower sweeter than all, a bird gayer than the robin, the little bird that chirps to the tune of "mamma! mamma!" the bright-faced fairy, whose tiny feet come pattering along, making a merry music, mamma's own Frances! And following her guidance, here we are in the dear round room time enough to catch the last rays of the sun, as they light the noble landscape which lies like a panorama around us, lingering longest on that long island of old thorns and stunted oaks, the oasis of B. Heath, and then vanishing in a succession of gorgeous clouds.

October 28th.—Another soft and brilliant morning. But the pleasures of to-day must be written in short-hand. I have left myself no room for notes of admiration.

First we drove about the coppice: an extensive wood of oak, and elm, and beech, chiefly the former, which adjoins the park-paling of F. Hill, of which demesne, indeed, it forms one of the most delightful parts. The roads through the coppice are studiously wild; so that they have the appearance of mere cart-tracks: and the manner in which the ground is tumbled about, the steep declivities, the sunny slopes, the sudden swells and falls, now a close narrow valley, then a sharp ascent to an eminence commanding an immense extent of prospect, have a striking air of natural beauty, developed and heightened

by the perfection of art. All this, indeed, was familiar to me ; the colouring only was new. I had been there in early spring, when the fragrant palms were on the willow, and the yellow tassels on the hazel, and every twig was swelling with renewed life ; and I had been there again and again in the green leafiness of midsummer ; but never as now, when the dark verdure of the fir-plantations, hanging over the picturesque and unequal paling, partly covered with moss and ivy, contrasts so remarkably with the shining orange-leaves of the beech, already half fallen, the pale yellow of the scattering elm, the deeper and richer tints of the oak, and the glossy stems of the "lady of the woods," the delicate weeping birch. The underwood is no less picturesque. The red-spotted leaves and redder berries of the old thorns, the scarlet festoons of the bramble, the tall fern of every hue, seem to vie with the brilliant mosaic of the ground, now covered with dead leaves and strewn with fir-cones, now, where a little glade intervenes, gay with various mosses and splendid *fungi*. How beautiful is this coppice to-day ! especially where the little spring, as clear as crystal, comes bubbling out from the "old fantastic" beech root, and trickles over the grass, bright and silent as the dew in a May morning. The wood-pigeons (who are just returned from their summer migration, and are cropping the ivy berries) add their low cooings, the very note of love, to the slight fluttering of the falling leaves in the quiet air, giving a voice to the sunshine and the beauty. This coppice is a place to live and die in. But we must go. And how fine is the ascent which leads us again into the world, past those cottages hidden as in a pit, and by that hanging orchard and that rough heathy bank ! The scenery in this one spot has a wildness, an abruptness of rise and fall, rare in any part of England, rare above all in this rich and lovely but monotonous county. It is Switzerland in miniature.

And now we cross the hill to pay a morning visit to the family at the great house,—another fine place, commanding another fine sweep of country. The park, studded with old

trees, and sinking gently into a valley, rich in wood and water, is in the best style of ornamental landscape, though more according to the common routine of gentlemen's seats than the singularly original place which we have just left. There is, however, one distinctive beauty in the grounds of the great house;—the magnificent firs which shade the terraces and surround the sweep, giving out in summer odours really Sæbean, and now in this low autumn sun producing an effect almost magical, as the huge red trunks, garlanded with ivy, stand out from the deep shadows like an army of giants. In-doors—Oh I must not take my readers in-doors, or we shall never get away!—In-doors the sun-shine is brighter still; for there, in a lofty lightsome room, sat a damsel fair and arch and *piquant*, one whom Titian or Velasquez should be born again to paint, leaning over an instrument* as sparkling and fanciful as herself, singing pretty French romances, and Scottish Jacobite songs, and all sorts of graceful and airy drolleries picked up I know not where—an English improvisatrice! a gayer Annot Lyle! whilst her sister, of a higher order of beauty, and with an earnest kindness in her smile that deepens its power, lends to the piano, as her father to the violin, an expression, a sensibility, a spirit, an eloquence almost super-human—almost divine! Oh to hear these two instruments accompanying my dear companion (I forgot to say that she is a singer worthy to be so accompanied) in Haydn's exquisite canzonet, "She never told her love,"—to hear her voice, with all its power, its sweetness, its gush of sound, so sustained and assisted by modulations that rivalled its intensity of expression; to hear at once such poetry, such music, such execution, is a pleasure never to be forgotten, or mixed with meaner things. I seem to hear it still.

As in the bursting spring time o'er the eye
Of one who haunts the fields fair visions creep
Beneath the closed lids (afore dull sleep
Dims the quick fancy) of sweet flowers that lie

* The dital harp

On grassy banks, oxlip of orient dye,
 And palest primrose and blue violet,
 All in their fresh and dewy beauty set,
 Pictured within the sense, and will not fly :
 So in mine ear resounds and lives again
 One mingled melody,—a voice, a pair
 Of instruments most voice-like ! Of the air
 Rather than of the earth seems that high strain,
 A spirit's song, and worthy of the train
 That soothed old Prospero with music rare.

THE COPSE.



APRIL 18th.—Sad wintry weather ; a north-east wind ; a sun that puts out one's eyes, without affording the slightest warmth ; dryness that chaps lips and hands like a frost in December ; rain that comes chilling and arrowy like hail in January ; nature at a dead pause ; no seeds up in the garden ; no leaves out in the hedge-rows ; no cowslips swinging their pretty bells in the fields ; no nightingales in the dingles ; no swallows skimming round the great pond ; no cuckoos (that ever I should miss that rascally sonneteer !) in any part. Nevertheless there is something of a charm in this wintry spring, this putting-back of the seasons. If the flower-clock must stand still for a month or two, could it choose a better

time than that of the primroses and violets? I never remember (and for such gauds my memory, if not very good for aught of wise or useful, may be trusted) such an affluence of the one or such a duration of the other. Primrosy is the epithet which this year will retain in my recollection. Hedge, ditch, meadow, field, even the very paths and highways, are set with them; but their chief *habitat* is a certain copse, about a mile off, where they are spread like a carpet, and where I go to visit them rather oftener than quite comports with the dignity of a lady of mature age. I am going thither this very afternoon, and May and her company are going too.

This Mayflower of mine is a strange animal. Instinct and imitation make in her an approach to reason which is sometimes almost startling. She mimics all that she sees us do, with the dexterity of a monkey, and far more of gravity and apparent purpose; cracks nuts and eats them; gathers currants and severs them from the stalk with the most delicate nicety; filches and munches apples and pears; is as dangerous in an orchard as a schoolboy; smells to flowers; smiles at meeting; answers in a pretty lively voice when spoken to, (sad pity that the language should be unknown!) and has greatly the advantage of us in a conversation, inasmuch as our meaning is certainly clear to her;—all this and a thousand amusing prettinesses, (to say nothing of her canine feat of bringing her game straight to her master's feet, and refusing to resign it to any hand but his,) does my beautiful greyhound perform untaught, by the mere effect of imitation and sagacity. Well, May, at the end of the coursing season, having lost Brush, our old spaniel, her great friend, and the blue greyhound Mariette, her comrade and rival, both of which fourfooted worthies were sent out to keep for the summer, began to find solitude a weary condition, and to look abroad for company. Now it so happened that the same suspension of sport which had reduced our little establishment from three dogs to one, had also dispersed the splendid kennel of a celebrated courser

in our neighbourhood, three of whose finest young dogs came home to "their walk" (as the sporting phrase goes) at the collar-maker's in our village. May, accordingly, on the first morning of her solitude, (she had never taken the slightest notice of her neighbours before, although they had sojourned in our street upwards of a fortnight,) bethought herself of the timely resource offered to her by the vicinity of these canine *beaux*, and went up boldly and knocked at their stable door, which was already very commodiously on the half-latch. The three dogs came out with much alertness and gallantry, and May, declining apparently to enter their territories, brought them off to her own. This manœuvre has been repeated every day, with one variation; of the three dogs, the first a brindle, the second a yellow, and the third a black, the two first only are now admitted to walk or consort with her, and the last, poor fellow, for no fault that I can discover except May's caprice, is driven away not only by the fair lady, but even by his old companions—is, so to say, sent to Coventry. Of her two permitted followers, the yellow gentleman, Saladin by name, is decidedly the favourite. He is, indeed, May's shadow, and will walk with me whether I choose or not. It is quite impossible to get rid of him unless by discarding Miss May also;—and to accomplish a walk in the country without her, would be like an adventure of Don Quixote without his faithful squire Sancho.

So forth we set, May and I, and Saladin and the brindle; May and myself walking with the sedateness and decorum befitting our sex and age (she is five years old this grass, rising six)—the young things, for the soldan and the brindle are (not meaning any disrespect) little better than puppies, frisking and frolicking as best pleased them.

Our route lay for the first part along the sheltered quiet lanes which lead to our old habitation; a way never trodden by me without peculiar and home-like feelings, full of the recollections, the pains and pleasures, of other days. But we are

not to talk sentiment now ;—even May would not understand that maudlin language. We must get on. What a wintry hedge-row this is for the eighteenth of April ! Primrosy to be sure, abundantly spangled with those stars of the earth,—but so bare, so leafless, so cold ! The wind whistles through the brown boughs as in winter. Even the early elder shoots, which do make an approach to springiness, look brown, and the small leaves of the woodbine, which have also ventured to peep forth, are of a *sad* purple, frost-bitten, like a dairy-maid's elbows on a *snowy* morning. The very birds, in this season of *pairing* and building, look chilly and uncomfortable, and their nests !——“ Oh Saladin ! come away from the hedge ! Don't you see that what puzzles you and makes you leap up in the air is a redbreast's nest ? Don't you see the pretty speckled eggs ? Don't you hear the poor hen calling as it were for help ? Come here this moment, sir ! ” And by good luck Saladin (who for a paynim has tolerable qualities) comes, before he has touched the nest, or before his playmate the brindle, the less manageable of the two, has espied it.

Now we go round the corner and cross the bridge, where the common, with its clear stream winding between clumps of elms, assumes so park-like an appearance. Who is this approaching so slowly and majestically, this square bundle of petticoat and cloak, this road-waggon of a woman ? It is, it must be Mrs. Sally Mearing, the completest specimen within my knowledge of farmeresses (may I be allowed that innovation in language ?) as they were. It can be nobody else.

Mrs. Sally Mearing, when I first became acquainted with her, occupied, together with her father, (a superannuated man of ninety,) a large farm very near our former habitation. It had been anciently a great manor-farm or court-house, and was still a stately, substantial building, whose lofty halls and spacious chambers gave an air of grandeur to the common offices to which they were applied. Traces of gilding might yet be seen on the pannels which covered the walls, and on

the huge carved chimney-pieces which rose almost to the ceilings ; and the marble tables and the inlaid oak staircase still spoke of the former grandeur of the court. Mrs. Sally corresponded well with the date of her mansion, although she troubled herself little with its dignity. She was thoroughly of the old school, and had a most comfortable contempt for the new : rose at four in winter and summer, breakfasted at six, dined at eleven in the forenoon, supped at five, and was regularly in bed before eight, except when the hay-time or the harvest imperiously required her to sit up till sun-set,—a necessity to which she submitted with no very good grace. To a deviation from these hours, and to the modern iniquities of white aprons, cotton stockings, and muslin handkerchiefs, (Mrs. Sally herself always wore check, black worsted, and a sort of yellow compound which she was wont to call *susy*,) together with the invention of drill plough and thrashing machines, and other agricultural novelties, she failed not to attribute all the mishaps or misdoings of the whole parish. The last-mentioned discovery especially aroused her indignation. Oh to hear her descant on the merits of the flail, wielded by a stout right arm, such as she had known in her youth, (for by her account there was as great a deterioration in bones and sinews as in the other implements of husbandry,) was enough to make the very inventor break his machine. She would even take up her favourite instrument, and thrash the air herself by way of illustrating her argument, and, to say truth, few men in these degenerate days could have matched the stout, brawny, muscular limb which Mrs. Sally displayed at sixty-five.

In spite of this contumacious rejection of agricultural improvements, the world went well with her at Court-Farm. A good landlord, an easy rent, incessant labour, unremitting frugality, and excellent times, insured a regular though moderate profit : and she lived on, grumbling and prospering, flourishing and complaining, till two misfortunes befell her at once—her father died, and her lease expired. The loss of her father,

although a bedridden man, turned of ninety, who could not in the course of nature have been expected to live long, was a terrible shock to a daughter, who was not so much younger as to be without fears for her own life, and who had besides been so used to nursing the good old man, and looking to his little comforts, that she missed him as a mother would miss an ailing child. The expiration of the lease was a grievance and a puzzle of a different nature. Her landlord would have willingly retained his excellent tenant, but not on the terms on which she then held the land, which had not varied for fifty years: so that poor Mrs. Sally had the misfortune to find rent rising and prices sinking both at the same moment—a terrible solecism in political economy. Even this, however, I believe she would have endured, rather than have quitted the house where she was born, and to which all her ways and notions were adapted, had not a priggish steward, as much addicted to improvement and reform as she was to precedent and established usages, insisted on binding her by lease to spread a certain number of loads of chalk on every field. This tremendous innovation, for never had that novelty in manure whitened the crofts and pightles of Court-Farm, decided her at once. She threw the proposals into the fire, and left the place in a week.

Her choice of a habitation occasioned some wonder, and much amusement in our village world. To be sure, upon the verge of seventy, an old maid may be permitted to dispense with the more rigid punctilio of her class, but Mrs. Sally had always been so tenacious on the score of character, so very a prude, so determined an avoider of the “men folk,” (as she was wont contemptuously to call them,) that we all were conscious of something like astonishment, on finding that she and her little handmaid had taken up their abode in one end of a spacious farm-house belonging to the bluff old bachelor, George Robinson, of the Lea. Now farmer Robinson was quite as notorious for his aversion to petticoated things, as

Mrs. Sally for her hatred to the unfeathered bipeds who wear doublet and hose, so that there was a little astonishment in that quarter too, and plenty of jests, which the honest farmer speedily silenced, by telling all who joked on the subject that he had given his lodger fair warning, that, let people say what they would, he was quite determined not to marry her ; so that if she had any views that way, it would be better for her to go elsewhere. This declaration, which must be admitted to have been more remarkable for frankness than civility, made, however, no ill impression on Mrs. Sally. To the farmer's she went, and at his house she lives still, with her little maid, her tabby cat, a decrepit sheep-dog, and much of the lumber of Court-Farm, which she could not find in her heart to part from. There she follows her old ways and her old hours, untempted by matrimony, and unassailed (as far as I hear) by love or by scandal, with no other grievance than an occasional dearth of employment for herself and her young lass, (even pewter dishes do not always want scouring,) and now and then a twinge of the rheumatism.

Here she is, that good relique of the olden time—for, in spite of her whims and prejudices, a better and a kinder woman never lived—here she is, with the hood of her red cloak pulled over her close black bonnet, of that silk which once (it may be presumed) was fashionable, since it is still called mode, and her whole stout figure huddled up in a miscellaneous and most substantial covering of thick petticoats, gowns, aprons, shawls, and cloaks,—a weight which it requires the strength of a thrasher to walk under,—here she is, with her square honest visage, and her loud frank voice ;—and we hold a pleasant disjointed chat of rheumatisms and early chickens, bad weather, and hats with feathers in them ;—the last exceedingly sore subject being introduced by poor Jane Davis, (a cousin of Mrs. Sally,) who, passing us in a beaver bonnet, on her road from school, stopped to drop her little curtsy, and was soundly scolded for her civility. Jane, who is a

gentle, humble, smiling lass, about twelve years old, receives so many rebukes from her worthy relative, and bears them so meekly, that I should not wonder if they were to be followed by a legacy: I sincerely wish they may. Well, at last we said good bye; when, on inquiring my destination, and hearing that I was bent to the ten-acre copse, (part of the farm which she ruled so long,) she stopped me to tell a dismal story of two sheep-stealers who, sixty years ago, were found hidden in that copse, and only taken after great difficulty and resistance, and the maiming of a peace-officer.—“Pray don’t go there, Miss! For mercy’s sake don’t be so venturesome! Think if they should kill you!” were the last words of Mrs. Sally.

Many thanks for her care and kindness! But, without being at all fool-hardy in general, I have no great fear of the sheep-stealers of sixty years ago. Even if they escaped hanging for that exploit, I should greatly doubt their being in case to attempt another. So on we go: down the short shady lane, and out on the pretty retired green, shut in by fields and hedge-rows, which we must cross to reach the copse. How lively this green nook is to-day, half covered with cows, and horses, and sheep! And how glad these frolicsome greyhounds are to exchange the hard gravel of the high road for this pleasant short turf, which seems made for their gambols! How beautifully they are at play, chasing each other round and round in lessening circles, darting off at all kinds of angles, crossing and recrossing May, and trying to win her sedateness into a game at romps, turning round on each other with gay defiance, pursuing the cows and the colts, leaping up as if to catch the crows in their flight;—all in their harmless and innocent——“Ah wretches! villains! rascals! four-footed mischiefs! canine plagues! Saladin! Brindle!”—They are after the sheep——“Saladin, I say!”—They have actually singled out that pretty spotted lamb——“Brutes, if I catch you! Saladin! Brindle!” We shall be taken up for sheep-stealing presently

ourselves. They have chased the poor little lamb into a ditch, and are mounting guard over it, standing at bay.—“Ah wretches, I have you now! for shame, Saladin! Get away, Brindle! See how good May is. Off with you, brutes! For shame! For shame!” and brandishing a handkerchief, which could hardly be an efficient instrument of correction, I succeeded in driving away the two puppies, who after all meant nothing more than play, although it was somewhat rough, and rather too much in the style of the old fable of the boys and the frogs. May is gone after them, perhaps to scold them: for she has been as grave as a judge during the whole proceeding, keeping ostentatiously close to me, and taking no part whatever in the mischief.

The poor little pretty lamb! here it lies on the bank quite motionless, frightened I believe to death, for certainly those villains never touched it. It does not stir. Does it breathe? Oh yes, it does! It is alive, safe enough. Look, it opens its eyes, and, finding the coast clear and its enemies far away, it springs up in a moment and gallops to its dam, who has stood bleating the whole time at a most respectful distance. Who would suspect a lamb of so much simple cunning? I really thought the pretty thing was dead—and now how glad the ewe is to recover her curling spotted little one! How fluttered they look! Well! this adventure has flurried me too; between fright and running, I warrant you my heart beats as fast as the lamb's.

Ah! here is the shameless villain Saladin, the cause of the commotion, thrusting his slender nose into my hand to beg pardon and make up! “Oh wickedest of soldans! Most iniquitous pagan! Soul of a Turk!”—but there is no resisting the good-humoured creature's penitence. I must pat him. “There! there! Now we will go to the copse, I am sure we shall find no worse malefactors than ourselves—shall we, May?—and the sooner we get out of sight of the sheep the better; for Brindle seems meditating another attack. *Allons, mes-*

sieurs, over this gate, across this meadow, and here is the copse."

How boldly that superb ash-tree with its fine silver bark rises from the bank, and what a fine entrance it makes with the holly beside it, which also deserves to be called a tree! But here we are in the copse. Ah! only one half of the underwood was cut last year, and the other is at its full growth: hazel, brier, woodbine, bramble, forming one impenetrable thicket, and almost uniting with the lower branches of the elms, and oaks, and beeches, which rise at regular distances over-head. No foot can penetrate that dense and thorny entanglement; but there is a walk all round by the side of the wide sloping bank, walk and bank and copse carpeted with primroses, whose fresh and balmy odour impregnates the very air. Oh how exquisitely beautiful! and it is not the primroses only, those gems of flowers, but the natural mosaic of which they form a part: that net-work of ground-ivy, with its lilac blossoms and the subdued tint of its purplish leaves, those rich mosses, those enamelled wild hyacinths, those spotted arums, and above all those wreaths of ivy linking all those flowers together with chains of leaves more beautiful than blossoms, whose white veins seem swelling amidst the deep green or splendid brown;—it is the whole earth that is so beautiful! Never surely were primroses so richly set, and never did primroses better deserve such a setting. There they are of their own lovely yellow, the hue to which they have given a name, the exact tint of the butterfly that overhangs them (the first I have seen this year! can spring really be coming at last?)—sprinkled here and there with tufts of a reddish purple, and others of the purest white, as some accident of soil affects that strange and inscrutable operation of nature, the colouring of flowers. Oh how fragrant they are, and how pleasant it is to sit in this sheltered copse, listening to the fine creaking of the wind amongst the branches, the most unearthly of sounds, with this gay tapestry

under our feet, and the wood-pigeons flitting from tree to tree, and mixing the deep note of love with the elemental music.

Yes ! spring is coming. Wood-pigeons, butterflies, and sweet flowers, all give token of the sweetest of the seasons. Spring is coming. The hazel stalks are swelling and putting forth their pale tassels, the satin palms with their honeyed odours are out on the willow, and the last lingering winter berries are dropping from the hawthorn, and making way for the bright and blossomy leaves.

THE WOOD.

APRIL 20th.—Spring is actually come now, with the fulness and almost the suddenness of a northern summer. To-day is completely April ;—clouds and sunshine, wind and showers ; blossoms on the trees, grass in the fields, swallows by the ponds, snakes in the hedge-rows, nightingales in the thickets, and cuckoos every where. My young friend Ellen G. is going with me this evening to gather wood-sorrel. She never saw that most elegant plant, and is so delicate an artist that the introduction will be a mutual benefit ; Ellen will gain a subject worthy of her pencil, and the pretty weed will live ;—no small favour to a flower almost as transitory as the gum cistus : duration is the only charm which it wants, and that Ellen will give it. The weather is, to be sure, a little threatening, but we are not people to mind the weather when we have an object in view ; we shall certainly go in quest of the wood-sorrel, and will take May, provided we can escape May's followers ; for since the adventure of the lamb, Saladin has had an affair with a gander, furious in defence of his goslings, in which rencontre the gander came off conqueror ; and as geese abound in the wood to which we are going, (called by the country people the Pinge,) and the victory may not always incline to the

right side, I should be very sorry to lead the Soldan to fight his battles over again. We will take nobody but May.

So saying, we proceeded on our way through winding lanes, between hedge-rows tenderly green, till we reached the hatch-gate, with the white cottage beside it embosomed in fruit trees, which forms the entrance to the Pinge, and in a moment the whole scene was before our eyes.

"Is not this beautiful, Ellen?" The answer could hardly be other than a glowing rapid "Yes!"—A wood is generally a pretty place; but this wood—Imagine a smaller forest, full of glades and sheep-walks, surrounded by irregular cottages with their blooming orchards, a clear stream winding about the brakes, and a road intersecting it, and giving life and light to the picture; and you will have a faint idea of the Pinge. Every step was opening a new point of view, a fresh combination of glade and path and thicket. The accessories too were changing every moment. Ducks, geese, pigs, and children, giving way, as we advanced into the wood, to sheep and forest ponies; and they again disappearing as we became more entangled in its mazes, till we heard nothing but the song of the nightingale, and saw only the silent flowers.

What a piece of fairy land! The tall elms over head just bursting into tender vivid leaf, with here and there a hoary oak or a silver-barked beech, every twig swelling with the brown buds, and yet not quite stripped of the tawny foliage of autumn; tall hollies and hawthorn beneath, with their crisp brilliant leaves mixed with the white blossoms of the sloe, and woven together with garlands of woodbines and wild-briers;—what a fairy land!

Primroses, cowslips, pansies, and the regular open-eyed white blossom of the wood anemone, (or to use the more elegant Hampshire name, the windflower,) were set under our feet as thick as daisies in a meadow; but the pretty weed that we came to seek was coyer; and Ellen began to fear that we had mistaken the place or the season.—At last she had her-

self the pleasure of finding it under a brake of holly—"Oh look! look! I am sure that this is the wood-sorrel! Look at the pendent white flower, shaped like a snow-drop and veined with purple streaks, and the beautiful trefoil leaves folded like a heart,—some, the young ones, so vividly yet tenderly green that the foliage of the elm and the hawthorn would show dully at their side,—others of a deeper tint, and lined, as it were, with a rich and changeful purple!—Don't you see them?" pursued my dear young friend, who is a delightful piece of life and sunshine, and was half inclined to scold me for the calmness with which, amused by her enthusiasm, I stood listening to her ardent exclamations—"Don't you see them? Oh how beautiful! and in what quantity! what profusion! See how the dark shade of the holly sets off the light and delicate colouring of the flower!—And see that other bed of them springing from the rich moss in the roots of that old beech tree! Pray let us gather some. Here are baskets." So, quickly and carefully we began gathering, leaves, blossoms, roots and all, for the plant is so fragile that it will not brook separation;—quickly and carefully we gathered, encountering divers petty misfortunes in spite of all our care, now caught by the veil in a holly bush, now hitching our shawls in a bramble, still gathering on, in spite of scratched fingers, till we had nearly filled our baskets and began to talk of our departure:—

"But where is May? May! May! No going home without her. May! Here she comes galloping, the beauty!"—(Ellen is almost as fond of May as I am.)—"What has she got in her mouth? that rough, round, brown substance which she touches so tenderly? What can it be? A bird's nest? Naughty May!"

"No! as I live, a hedgehog! Look, Ellen, how it has coiled itself into a thorny ball! Off with it, May! Don't bring it to me!"—And May, somewhat reluctant to part with her prickly prize, however troublesome of carriage,

whose change of shape seemed to me to have puzzled her sagacity more than any event I ever witnessed, for in general she has perfectly the air of understanding all that is going forward—May at last dropt the hedgehog ; continuing, however, to pat it with her delicate cat-like paw, cautiously and daintily applied, and caught back suddenly and rapidly after every touch, as if her poor captive had been a red-hot coal. Finding that these pats entirely failed in solving the riddle, (for the hedgehog shammed dead, like the lamb the other day, and appeared entirely motionless,) she gave him so spirited a nudge with her pretty black nose, that she not only turned him over, but sent him rolling some little way along the turfy path,—an operation which that sagacious quadruped endured with the most perfect passiveness, the most admirable non-resistance. No wonder that May's discernment was at fault, I myself, if I had not been aware of the trick, should have said that the ugly rough thing which she was trundling along, like a bowl or a cricket-ball, was an inanimate substance, something devoid of sensation and of will. At last my poor pet, thoroughly perplexed and tired out, fairly relinquished the contest, and came slowly away, turning back once or twice to look at the object of her curiosity, as if half inclined to return and try the event of another shove. The sudden flight of a wood-pigeon effectually diverted her attention ; and Ellen amused herself by fancying how the hedgehog was scuttling away, till our notice was also attracted by a very different object.

We had nearly threaded the wood, and were approaching an open grove of magnificent oaks on the other side, when sounds other than of nightingales burst on our ear, the deep and frequent strokes of the woodman's axe, and emerging from the Pinge we discovered the havoc which that axe had committed. Above twenty of the finest trees lay stretched on the velvet turf. There they lay in every shape and form of devastation : some, bare trunks stripped ready for the tim-

ber carriage, with the bark built up in long piles at the side ; some with the spoilers busy about them, stripping, hacking, hewing ; others with their noble branches, their brown and fragrant shoots all fresh as if they were alive—majestic corpses, the slain of to-day ! The grove was like a field of battle. The young lads who were stripping the bark, the very children who were picking up the chips, seemed awed and silent, as if conscious that death was around them. The nightingales sang faintly and interruptedly—a few low frightened notes like a requiem.

Ah ! here we are at the very scene of murder, the very tree that they are felling ; they have just hewn round the trunk with those slaughtering axes, and are about to saw it asunder. After all, it is a fine and thrilling operation, as the work of death usually is. Into how grand an attitude was that young man thrown as he gave the final strokes round the root ; and how wonderful is the effect of that supple and apparently powerless saw, bending like a riband, and yet overmastering that giant of the woods, conquering and overthrowing that thing of life ! Now it has passed half through the trunk, and the woodman has begun to calculate which way the tree will fall ; he drives a wedge to direct its course ;—now a few more movements of the noiseless saw ; and then a larger wedge. See how the branches tremble ! Hark how the trunk begins to crack ! Another stroke of the huge hammer on the wedge, and the tree quivers, as with a mortal agony, shakes, reels, and falls. How slow, and solemn, and awful it is ! How like to death, to human death in its grandest form ! Cæsar in the Capitol, Seneca in the bath, could not fall more sublimely than that oak.

Even the heavens seem to sympathize with the devastation. The clouds have gathered into one thick low canopy, dark and vapoury as the smoke which overhangs London ; the setting sun is just gleaming underneath with a dim and bloody glare, and the crimson rays spreading upward with a

lurid and portentous grandeur, a subdued and dusky glow, like the light reflected on the sky from some vast conflagration. The deep flush fades away, and the rain begins to descend; and we hurry homeward rapidly, yet sadly, forgetful alike of the flowers, the hedgehog, and the wetting, thinking and talking only of the fallen tree.

THE DELL.

MAY 2nd.—A delicious evening;—bright sunshine; light summer air; a sky almost cloudless; and a fresh yet delicate verdure on the hedges and in the fields;—an evening that seems made for a visit to my newly-discovered haunt, the mossy dell, one of the most beautiful spots in the neighbourhood, which after passing, times out of number, the field which it terminates, we found out about two months ago from the accident of May's killing a rabbit there. May has had a fancy for the place ever since; and so have I.

Thither accordingly we bend our way;—through the village;—up the hill;—along the common;—past the avenue;—across the bridge; and by the mill. How deserted the road is to-night! We have not seen a single acquaintance, except poor blind Robert, laden with his sack of grass plucked from the hedges, and the little boy that leads him. A singular division of labour! Little Jem guides Robert to the spots where the long grass grows, and tells him where it is most plentiful; and then the old man cuts it close to the roots, and between them they fill the sack, and sell the contents in the village. Half the cows in the street—for our baker, our wheelwright, and our shoemaker has each his Alderney—owe the best part of their maintenance to blind Robert's industry.

Here we are at the entrance of the corn-field which leads to the dell, and which commands so fine a view of the Loddon, the mill, the great farm, with its picturesque outbuild-

ings, and the range of woody hills beyond. It is impossible not to pause a moment at that gate, the landscape, always beautiful, is so suited to the season and the hour,—so bright, and gay, and spring-like. But May, who has the chance of another rabbit in her pretty head, has galloped forward to the dingle, and poor May, who follows me so faithfully in all my wanderings, has a right to a little indulgence in hers. So to the dingle we go.

At the end of the field, which when seen from the road seems terminated by a thick dark coppice, we come suddenly to the edge of a ravine, on one side fringed with a low growth of alder, birch, and willow, on the other mossy, turfy, and bare, or only broken by bright tufts of blossomed broom. One or two old pollards almost conceal the winding road that leads down the descent, by the side of which a spring as bright as crystal runs gurgling along. The dell itself is an irregular piece of broken ground, in some parts very deep, intersected by two or three high banks of equal irregularity, now abrupt and bare, and rock-like, now crowned with tufts of the feathery willow or magnificent old thorns. Every where the earth is covered by short fine turf, mixed with mosses, soft, beautiful, and various, and embossed with the speckled leaves and lilac flowers of the arum, the paler blossoms of the common orchis, the enamelled blue of the wild hyacinth, so splendid in this evening light, and large tufts of oxlips and cowslips rising like nosegays from the short turf.

The ground on the other side of the dell is much lower than the field through which we came, so that it is mainly to the labyrinthine intricacy of these high banks that it owes its singular character of wildness and variety. Now we seem hemmed in by those green cliffs, shut out from all the world, with nothing visible but those verdant mounds and the deep blue sky ; now by some sudden turn we get a peep at an adjoining meadow, where the sheep are lying, dappling its sloping surface like the small clouds on the summer heaven.

Poor harmless, quiet creatures, how still they are ! Some socially lying side by side ; some grouped in threes and fours ; some quite apart. Ah ! there are lambs amongst them—pretty, pretty lambs !—nestled in by their mothers. Soft, quiet, sleepy things ! Not all so quiet, though ! There is a party of these young lambs as wide awake as heart can desire ; half a dozen of them playing together, frisking, dancing, leaping, butting, and crying in the young voice, which is so pretty a diminutive of the full-grown bleat. How beautiful they are with their innocent spotted faces, their mottled feet, their long curly tails, and their light flexible forms, frolicking like so many kittens, but with a gentleness, an assurance of sweetness and innocence, which no kitten, nothing that ever is to be a cat, can have. How complete and perfect is their enjoyment of existence ! Ah ! little rogues ! your play has been too noisy ; you have awakened your mammas ; and two or three of the old ewes are getting up ; and one of them marching gravely to the troop of lambs has selected her own, given her a gentle butt, and trotted off ; the poor rebuked lamb following meekly, but every now and then stopping and casting a longing look at its playmates ; who, after a moment's awed pause, had resumed their gambols ; whilst the stately dam every now and then looked back in her turn, to see that her little one was following. At last she lay down, and the lamb by her side. I never saw so pretty a pastoral scene in my life.*

* I have seen one which affected me much more. Walking in the Church-lane with one of the young ladies of the vicarage, we met a large flock of sheep, with the usual retinue of shepherds and dogs. Lingered after them and almost out of sight, we encountered a straggling ewe, now trotting along, now walking, and every now and then stopping to look back, and bleating. A little behind her came a lame lamb, bleating occasionally, as if in answer to its dam, and doing its very best to keep up with her. It was a lameness of both the fore feet ; the knees were bent, and it seemed to walk on the very edge of the hoof—on tip-toe, if I may venture such an expression. My young friend thought that the lameness proceeded

Another turning of the dell gives a glimpse of the dark coppice by which it is backed, and from which we are separated by some marshy, rushy ground, where the springs have formed into a pool, and where the moor-hen loves to build her nest. Ay, there is one scudding away now;—I can hear her splash into the water, and the rustling of her wings amongst the rushes. This is the deepest part of the wild dingle. How uneven the ground is! Surely these excavations, now so thoroughly clothed with vegetation, must originally have been huge gravel pits; there is no other way of accounting for the labyrinth, for they do dig gravel in such capricious meanders; but the quantity seems incredible. Well! there is no end of guessing! We are getting amongst the springs, and must turn back. Round this corner, where on ledges like fairy terraces the orchises and arums grow, and we emerge suddenly on a new side of the dell, just fronting the small homestead of our good neighbour farmer Allen.

This rustic dwelling belongs to what used to be called in this part of the country “a little bargain:” thirty or forty acres, perhaps, of arable land, which the owner and his sons cultivated themselves, whilst the wife and daughters assisted in the husbandry, and eked out the slender earnings by the produce of the dairy, the poultry yard, and the orchard;—an order of cultivators now passing rapidly away, but in which much of the best part of the English character, its industry, its frugality,

from original malformation, I am rather of opinion that it was accidental, and that the poor creature was wretchedly foot-sore. However that might be, the pain and difficulty with which it took every step were not to be mistaken; and the distress and fondness of the mother, her perplexity as the flock passed gradually out of sight, the effort with which the poor lamb contrived to keep up a sort of trot, and their mutual calls and lamentations were really so affecting, that Ellen and I, although not at all larmoyante sort of people, had much ado not to cry. We could not find a boy to carry the lamb, which was too big for us to manage;—but I was quite sure that the ewe would not desert it, and as the dark was coming on, we both trusted that the shepherds on folding their flock would miss them and return for them;—and so I am happy to say it proved.

its sound sense, and its kindness might be found. Farmer Allen himself is an excellent specimen, the cheerful, venerable old man with his long white hair, and his bright grey eye, and his wife is a still finer. They have had a hard struggle to win through the world and keep their little property undivided; but good management and good principles, and the assistance afforded them by an admirable son, who left our village a poor 'prentice boy, and is now a partner in a great house in London, have enabled them to overcome all the difficulties of these trying times, and they are now enjoying the peaceful evening of a well-spent life as free from care and anxiety as their best friends could desire.

Ah! there is Mr. Allen in the orchard, the beautiful orchard, with its glorious garlands of pink and white, its pearly pear-blossoms and coral apple-buds. What a flush of bloom it is! How brightly delicate it appears, thrown into strong relief by the dark house and the weather-stained barn, in this soft evening light! The very grass is strewed with the snowy petals of the pear and the cherry. And there sits Mrs. Allen, feeding her poultry, with her three little grand-daughters from London, pretty fairies from three years old to five (only two and twenty months elapsed between the birth of the eldest and the youngest) playing round her feet.

Mrs. Allen, my dear Mrs. Allen, has been that rare thing a beauty, and although she be now an old woman I had almost said that she is so still. Why should I not say so? Nobleness of feature and sweetness of expression are surely as delightful in age as in youth. Her face and figure are much like those which are stamped indelibly on the memory of every one who ever saw that grand specimen of woman—Mrs. Siddons. The outline of Mrs. Allen's face is exactly the same; but there is more softness, more gentleness, a more feminine composure in the eye and in the smile. Mrs. Allen never played Lady Macbeth. Her hair, almost as black as at twenty, is parted on her large fair forehead, and combed under her exquisitely

neat and snowy cap; a muslin neck-kerchief, a grey stuff gown, and a white apron complete the picture.

There she sits under an old elder tree which flings its branches over her like a canopy, whilst the setting sun illumines her venerable figure and touches the leaves with an emerald light; there she sits, placid and smiling, with her spectacles in her hand and a measure of barley on her lap, into which the little girls are dipping their chubby hands and scattering the corn amongst the ducks and chickens with unspeakable glee. But those ingrates the poultry don't seem so pleased and thankful as they ought to be; they mistrust their young feeders. All domestic animals dislike children, partly from an instinctive fear of their tricks and their thoughtlessness; partly, I suspect, from jealousy. Jealousy seems a strange tragic passion to attribute to the inmates of the basse cour,—but only look at that strutting fellow of a bantam cock, (evidently a favourite,) who sidles up to his old mistress with an air half affronted and half tender, turning so scornfully from the barley-corns which Annie is flinging towards him, and say if he be not as jealous as Othello! Nothing can pacify him but Mrs. Allen's notice and a dole from her hand. See, she is calling to him and feeding him, and now how he swells out his feathers, and flutters his wings, and erects his glossy neck, and struts and crows and pecks, proudest and happiest of bantams, the pet and glory of the poultry yard!

In the mean time my own pet May, who has all this while been peeping into every hole, and penetrating every nook and winding of the dell, in hopes to find another rabbit, has returned to my side, and is sliding her snake-like head into my hand, at once to invite the caress which she likes so well, and to intimate, with all due respect, that it is time to go home. The setting sun gives the same warning; and in a moment we are through the dell, the field, and the gate, past the farm and the mill, and hanging over the bridge that crosses the Loddon river.

What a sunset! how golden! how beautiful! The sun just

disappearing, and the narrow liny clouds, which a few minutes ago lay like soft vapoury streaks along the horizon, lighted up with a golden splendour that the eye can scarcely endure, and those still softer clouds which floated above them wreathing and curling into a thousand fantastic forms, as thin and changeful as summer smoke, now defined and deepened into grandeur, and edged with ineffable, insufferable light ! Another minute and the brilliant orb totally disappears, and the sky above grows every moment more varied and more beautiful as the dazzling golden lines are mixed with glowing red and gorgeous purple, dappled with small dark specks, and mingled with such a blue as the egg of the hedge-sparrow. To look up at that glorious sky, and then to see that magnificent picture reflected in the clear and lovely Loddon water, is a pleasure never to be described and never forgotten. My heart swells and my eyes fill as I write of it, and think of the immeasurable majesty of nature, and the unspeakable goodness of God, who has spread an enjoyment so pure, so peaceful, and so intense before the meanest and the lowliest of His creatures.

THE OLD HOUSE AT ABERLEIGH.



JUNE 25th.—What a glowing glorious day ! Summer in its richest prime, noon in its most sparkling brightness, little

white clouds dappling the deep blue sky, and the sun, now partially veiled, and now bursting through them with an intensity of light ! It would not do to walk to-day, professedly to walk,—we should be frightened at the very sound ! and yet it is probable that we may be beguiled into a pretty long stroll before we return home. We are going to drive to the old house at Aberleigh, to spend the morning under the shade of those balmy firs, and amongst those luxuriant rose trees, and by the side of that brimming Loddon river. “Do not expect us before six o’clock,” said I, as I left the house ; “Six at soonest !” added my charming companion ; and off we drove in our little pony chaise, drawn by our old mare, and with the good-humoured urchin, Henry’s successor, a sort of younger Scrub, who takes care of horse and chaise, and cow and garden, for our charioteer.

My comrade in this homely equipage was a young lady of high family and higher endowments, to whom the novelty of the thing, and her own naturalness of character and simplicity of taste, gave an unspeakable enjoyment. She danced the little chaise up and down as she got into it, and laughed for very glee like a child. Lizzy herself could not have been more delighted. She praised the horse and the driver, and the roads and the scenery, and gave herself fully up to the enchantment of a rural excursion in the sweetest weather of this sweet season. I enjoyed all this too ; for the road was pleasant to every sense, winding through narrow lanes, under high elms, and between hedges garlanded with woodbine and rose trees, whilst the air was scented with the delicious fragrance of blossomed beans. I enjoyed it all,—but, I believe, my principal pleasure was derived from my companion herself.

Emily I. is a person whom it is a privilege to know. She is quite like a creation of the older poets, and might pass for one of Shakspeare’s or Fletcher’s women stepped into life ; just as tender, as playful, as gentle, and as kind. She is clever too, and has all the knowledge and accomplishments that a

carefully-conducted education, acting on a mind of singular clearness and ductility, matured and improved by the very best company, can bestow. But one never thinks of her acquirements. It is the charming artless character, the bewitching sweetness of manner, the real and universal sympathy, the quick taste and the ardent feeling, that one loves in Emily. She is Irish by birth, and has in perfection the melting voice and soft caressing accent by which her fair countrywomen are distinguished. Moreover she is pretty—I think her beautiful, and so do all who have heard as well as seen her,—but pretty, very pretty, all the world must confess; and perhaps that is a distinction more enviable, because less envied, than the “palmy state” of beauty. Her prettiness is of the prettiest kind—that of which the chief character is youthfulness. A short but pleasing figure, all grace and symmetry, a fair blooming face, beaming with intelligence and good-humour; the prettiest little feet and the whitest hands in the world;—such is Emily I.

She resides with her maternal grandmother, a venerable old lady, slightly shaken with the palsy; and when together, (and they are so fondly attached to each other that they are seldom parted,) it is one of the loveliest combinations of youth and age ever witnessed. There is no seeing them without feeling an increase of respect and affection for both grandmother and grand-daughter—always one of the tenderest and most beautiful of natural connexions—as Richardson knew when he made such exquisite use of it in his matchless book. I fancy that grandmamma Shirley must have been just such another venerable lady as Mrs. S., and our sweet Emily—Oh, no! Harriet Byron is not half good enough for her! There is nothing like her in the whole seven volumes.

But here we are at the bridge! Here we must alight! “This is the Loddon, Emily. Is it not a beautiful river? rising level with its banks, so clear, and smooth, and peaceful, giving back the verdant landscape and the bright blue sky, and bearing on

its pellucid stream the snowy water-lily, the purest of flowers, which sits enthroned on its own cool leaves, looking chastity itself, like the lady in Comus. That queenly flower becomes the water, and so do the stately swans who are sailing so majestically down the stream, like those who

‘ On St. Mary’s lake
Float double, swan and shadow.’

We must dismount here, and leave Richard to take care of our equipage under the shade of these trees, whilst we walk up to the house:—See there it is ! We must cross this stile ; there is no other way now.”

And crossing the stile we were immediately in what had been a drive round a spacious park, and still retained something of the character, though the park itself had long been broken into arable fields,—and in full view of the Great House, a beautiful structure of James the First’s time, whose glassless windows and dilapidated doors form a melancholy contrast with the strength and entireness of the rich and massive front.

The story of that ruin—for such it is—is always to me singularly affecting : It is that of the decay of an ancient and distinguished family, gradually reduced from the highest wealth and station to actual poverty. The house and park, and a small estate around it, were entailed on a distant cousin, and could not be alienated ; and the late owner, the last of his name and lineage, after long struggling with debt and difficulty, farming his own lands, and clinging to his magnificent home with a love of place almost as tenacious as that of the younger Foscari, was at last forced to abandon it, retired to a paltry lodging in a paltry town, and died there about twenty years ago, broken-hearted. His successor, bound by no ties of association to the spot, and rightly judging the residence to be much too large for the diminished estate, immediately sold the superb fixtures, and would have entirely taken down the house, if, on making the attempt, the masonry had not been

found so solid that the materials were not worth the labour. A great part, however, of one side is laid open, and the splendid chambers, with their carving and gilding, are exposed to the wind and rain—sad memorials of past grandeur! The grounds have been left in a merciful neglect; the park, indeed, is broken up, the lawn mown twice a year like a common hay-field, the grotto mouldering into ruin, and the fish-ponds choked with rushes and aquatic plants; but the shrubs and flowering trees are undestroyed, and have grown into a magnificence of size and wildness of beauty, such as we may imagine them to attain in their native forests. Nothing can exceed their luxuriance, especially in the spring, when the lilac, and laburnum, and double-cherry put forth their gorgeous blossoms. There is a sweet sadness in the sight of such floweriness amidst such desolation; it seems the triumph of nature over the destructive power of man. The whole place, in that season more particularly, is full of a soft and soothing melancholy, reminding me, I scarcely know why, of some of the descriptions of natural scenery in the novels of Charlotte Smith, which I read when a girl, and which, perhaps, for that reason hang on my memory.

But here we are, in the smooth grassy ride, on the top of a steep turfy slope descending to the river, crowned with enormous firs and limes of equal growth, looking across the winding waters into a sweet peaceful landscape of quiet meadows, shut in by distant woods. What a fragrance is in the air from the balmy fir trees and the blossomed limes! What an intensity of odour! And what a murmur of bees in the lime trees! What a coil those little winged people make over our heads! And what a pleasant sound it is! the pleasantest of busy sounds, that which comes associated with all that is good and beautiful—industry and forecast, and sunshine and flowers. Surely these lime trees might store a hundred hives; the very odour is of a honeyed richness, cloying, satiating.

Emily exclaimed in admiration as we stood under the deep, strong, leafy shadow, and still more when honeysuckles trailed their untrimmed profusion in our path, and roses, really trees, almost intercepted our passage.

“On, Emily ! farther yet ! Force your way by that jessamine—it will yield ; I will take care of this stubborn white rose bough.”—“Take care of yourself ! Pray take care,” said my fairest friend ; “let me hold back the branches.”—After we had won our way through the strait, at some expense of veils and flounces, she stopped to contemplate and admire the tall graceful shrub, whose long thorny stems, spreading in every direction, had opposed our progress, and now waved their delicate clusters over our heads. “Did I ever think,” exclaimed she, “of standing under the shadow of a white rose tree ! What an exquisite fragrance ! And what a beautiful flower ! so pale, and white, and tender, and the petals thin and smooth as silk ! What rose is it ?”—“Don’t you know ? Did you never see it before ? It is rare now, I believe, and seems rarer than it is, because it only blossoms in very hot summers ; but this, Emily, is the musk rose,—that very musk rose of which Titania talks, and which is worthy of Shakspeare and of her. Is it not ?—No ! do not smell to it ; it is less sweet so than other roses ; but one cluster in a vase, or even that bunch in your bosom, will perfume a large room, as it does the summer air.”—“Oh ! we will take twenty clusters,” said Emily :—“I wish grandmamma were here ! She talks so often of a musk rose tree that grew against one end of her father’s house. I wish she were here to see this !”

Echoing her wish, and well laden with musk roses, planted perhaps in the days of Shakspeare, we reached the steps that led to a square summer-house or banqueting-room, overhanging the river : the under part was a boat-house, whose projecting roof, as well as the walls and the very top of the little tower, was covered with ivy and woodbine, and surmounted by tufted barberries, bird cherries, acacias, covered with their

snowy chains, and other pendent and flowering trees. Beyond rose two poplars of unrivalled magnitude, towering like stately columns over the dark tall firs, and giving a sort of pillared and architectural grandeur to the scene.

We were now close to the mansion ; but it looked sad and desolate, and the entrance, choked with brambles and nettles, seemed almost to repel our steps. The summer-house, the beautiful summer-house was free and open, and inviting, commanding from the unglazed windows, which hung high above the water, a reach of the river terminated by a rustic mill.

There we sat, emptying our little basket of fruit and country cakes, till Emily was seized with a desire of viewing, from the other side of the Loddon, the scenery which had so much enchanted her. "I must," said she, "take a sketch of the ivied boat-house, and of this sweet room, and this pleasant window ;—Grandmamma would never be able to walk from the road to see the place itself, but she must see its likeness." So forth we sallied, not forgetting the dear musk roses.

We had no way of reaching the desired spot but by retracing our steps a mile, during the heat of the hottest hour of the day, and then following the course of the river to an equal distance on the other side ; nor had we any materials for sketching, except the rumpled paper which had contained our repast, and a pencil without a point which I happened to have about me. But these small difficulties are pleasures to gay and happy youth. Regardless of such obstacles, the sweet Emily bounded on like a fawn, and I followed delighting in her delight. The sun went in, and the walk was delicious ; a reviving coolness seemed to breathe over the water, wafting the balmy scent of the firs and limes ; we found a point of view presenting the boat-house, the water, the poplars, and the mill, in a most felicitous combination ; the little straw fruit basket made a capital table ; and refreshed and sharpened and pointed by our trusty lacquey's excellent knife, (your country boy is never without a good knife, it is

his prime treasure,) the pencil did double duty ;—first in the skilful hands of Emily, whose faithful and spirited sketch does equal honour to the scene and to the artist, and then in the humbler office of attempting a faint transcript of my own impressions in the following sonnet :—

It was an hour of calmest noon, a day
 Of ripest summer : o'er the deep blue sky
 White speckled clouds came sailing peacefully,
 Half-shrouding in a chequer'd veil the ray
 Of the sun, too ardent else,—what time we lay
 By the smooth Loddon, opposite the high
 Steep bank, which as a coronet gloriously
 Wore its rich crest of firs and lime trees, gay
 With their pale tassels ; while from out a bower
 Of ivy (where those column'd poplars rear
 Their heads) the ruin'd boat-house, like a tower,
 Flung its deep shadow on the waters clear.
 My Emily ! forget not that calm hour,
 Nor that fair scene, by thee made doubly dear ?

THE SHAW.

SEPT. 9th.—A bright sunshiny afternoon. What a comfort it is to get out again—to see once more that rarity of rarities, a fine day ! We English people are accused of talking over-much of the weather ; but the weather, this summer, has forced people to talk of it. Summer ! did I say ? Oh ! season most unworthy of that sweet, sunny name ! Season of coldness and cloudiness, of gloom and rain ! A worse November !—for in November the days are short ; and shut up in a warm room, lighted by that household sun, a lamp, one feels through the long evenings comfortably independent of the out-of-door tempests. But though we may have, and did have, fires all through the dog-days, there is no shutting out day-light ; and sixteen hours of rain, pattering against the windows and dripping from the eaves—sixteen hours of rain,

not merely audible, but visible, for seven days in the week—would be enough to exhaust the patience of Job or Grizzel; especially if Job were a farmer, and Grizzel a country gentlewoman. Never was known such a season! Hay swimming, cattle drowning, fruit rotting, corn spoiling! and that naughty river, the Loddon, who never can take Puff's advice, and "keep between its banks," running about the country, fields, roads, gardens, and houses, like mad! The weather would be talked of. Indeed, it was not easy to talk of any thing else. A friend of mine having occasion to write me a letter, thought it worth abusing in rhyme, and bepommelled it through three pages of Bath-guide verse; of which I subjoin a specimen:—

"Aquarius surely *reigns* over the world,
And of late he his water-pot strangely has twirl'd;
Or he's taken a cullender up by mistake,
And unceasingly dips it in some mighty lake;
Though it is not in Lethe—for who can forget
The annoyance of getting most thoroughly wet?
It must be in the river called Styx, I declare,
For the moment it drizzles it makes the men swear.
'It did rain to-morrow,' is growing good grammar;
Vauxhall and camp-stools have been brought to the hammer;
A pony-gondola is all I can keep,
And I use my umbrella and pattens in sleep:
Row out of my window, whene'er 'tis my whim
To visit a friend, and just ask, 'Can you swim?'"

So far my friend.* In short, whether in prose or in verse,

* This friend of mine is a person of great quickness and talent, who, if she were not a beauty and a woman of fortune—that is to say, if she were prompted by either of those two powerful *stimuli*, want of money or want of admiration, to take due pains—would inevitably become a clever writer. As it is, her notes and *jeux d'esprit*, struck off *à trait de plume*, have great point and neatness. Take the following billet, which formed the label to a closed basket, containing the ponderous present alluded to, last Michaelmas day:—

"To Miss M.
'When this you see
Remember me,'
Was long a phrase in use;

every body railed at the weather. But this is over now. The sun has come to dry the world ; mud is turned into dust ; rivers have retreated to their proper limits ; farmers have left off grumbling ; and we are about to take a walk, as usual, as far as the Shaw, a pretty wood about a mile off. But one of our companions being a stranger to the gentle reader, we must do him the honour of an introduction.

Dogs, when they are sure of having their own way, have sometimes ways as odd as those of the unfurred, unfeathered animals, who walk on two legs, and talk, and are called rational. My beautiful white greyhound, Mayflower,* for instance, is as whimsical as the finest lady in the land. Amongst her other fancies, she has taken a violent affection for a most hideous stray dog, who made his appearance here about six months ago, and contrived to pick up a living in the village, one can hardly tell how. Now appealing to the charity of old Rachael Strong, the laundress—a dog-lover by profession ; now winning a meal from the light-footed and open-hearted lasses at the Rose ; now standing on his hind-legs, to extort by sheer beggary a scanty morsel from some pair of “drouthy cronies,” or solitary drover, discussing his dinner or supper on the alehouse-bench ; now catching a mouthful, flung to him in pure contempt by some scornful gentleman of the shoulder-knot, mounted on his throne, the coach-box, whose notice he had attracted by dint of ugliness ; now sharing the commons of Master Keep the shoemaker’s pigs ; now succeeding to the reversion of the well-gnawed bone of Master Brown the shopkeeper’s fierce house-dog ; now filching the skim-milk of Dame Wheeler’s cat :—spit at by the cat ; worried by the mastiff ; chased by the pigs ; screamed at by the dame ; stormed at by the shoemaker ;

And so I send
To you, dear friend,
My proxy. ‘What?’—A goose !”

* Dead, alas, since this was written.

flogged by the shopkeeper ; teased by all the children, and scouted by all the animals of the parish ;—but yet living through his griefs, and bearing them patiently, “for sufferance is the badge of all his tribe ;”—and even seeming to find, in an occasional full meal, or a gleam of sunshine, or a wisp of dry straw on which to repose his sorry carcase, some comfort in his disconsolate condition.

In this plight was he found by May, the most high-blooded and aristocratic of greyhounds ; and from this plight did May rescue him ;—invited him into her territory, the stable ; resisted all attempts to turn him out ; reinstated him there, in spite of maid and boy, and mistress and master ; wore out every body’s opposition, by the activity of her protection, and the pertinacity of her self-will ; made him sharer of her bed and of her mess ; and, finally, established him as one of the family as firmly as herself.

Dash—for he has even won himself a name amongst us, before he was anonymous—Dash is a sort of a kind of a spaniel ; at least there is in his mongrel composition some sign of that beautiful race. Besides his ugliness, which is of the worst sort—that is to say, the shabbiest—he has a limp on one leg that gives a peculiarly one-sided awkwardness to his gait ; but independently of his great merit in being May’s pet, he has other merits which serve to account for that phenomenon—being, beyond all comparison, the most faithful, attached, and affectionate animal that I have ever known ; and that is saying much. He seems to think it necessary to atone for his ugliness by extra good conduct, and does so dance on his lame leg, and so wag his scrubby tail, that it does any one who has a taste for happiness good to look at him—so that he may now be said to stand on his own footing. We are all rather ashamed of him when strangers come in the way, and think it necessary to explain that he is May’s pet ; but amongst ourselves, and those who are used to his appearance, he has reached the point of favouritism in his own person. I have, in common with

wiser women, the feminine weakness of loving whatever loves me—and, therefore, I like Dash. His master has found out that he is a capital finder, and in spite of his lameness will hunt a field or beat a cover with any spaniel in England—and, therefore, *he* likes Dash. The boy has fought a battle, in defence of his beauty, with another boy, bigger than himself, and beat his opponent most handsomely—and, therefore, *he* likes Dash; and the maids like him, or pretend to like him, because we do—as is the fashion of that pliant and imitative class. And now Dash and May follow us every where, and are going with us to the Shaw, as I said before—or rather to the cottage by the Shaw, to bespeak milk and butter of our little dairy-woman, Hannah Bint—a housewifely occupation, to which we owe some of our pleasantest rambles.

And now we pass the sunny, dusty village street—who would have thought, a month ago, that we should complain of sun and dust again!—and turn the corner where the two great oaks hang so beautifully over the clear deep pond, mixing their cool green shadows with the bright blue sky, and the white clouds that flit over it; and loiter at the wheeler's shop, always picturesque, with its tools, and its work, and its materials, all so various in form, and so harmonious in colour; and its noisy, merry workmen, hammering and singing, and making a various harmony also. The shop is rather empty to-day, for its usual inmates are busy on the green beyond the pond—one set building a cart, another painting a waggon. And then we leave the village quite behind, and proceed slowly up the cool, quiet lane, between tall hedge-rows of the darkest verdure, overshadowing banks green and fresh as an emerald.

Not so quick as I expected, though—for they are shooting here to-day, as Dash and I have both discovered: he with great delight, for a gun to him is as a trumpet to a war-horse; I with no less annoyance, for I don't think that a partridge itself, barring the accident of being killed, can be more startled than

I at that abominable explosion. Dash has certainly better blood in his veins than any one would guess to look at him. He even shows some inclination to elope into the fields, in pursuit of those noisy iniquities. But he is an orderly person after all, and a word has checked him.

Ah ! here is a shriller din mingling with the small artillery—a shriller and more continuous. We are not yet arrived within sight of Master Weston's cottage, snugly hidden behind a clump of elms ; but we are in full hearing of Dame Weston's tongue, raised as usual to scolding pitch. The Westons are new arrivals in our neighbourhood, and the first thing heard of them was a complaint from the wife to our magistrate of her husband's beating her : it was a regular charge of assault—an information in full form. A most piteous case did Dame Weston make of it, softening her voice for the nonce into a shrill tremulous whine, and exciting the mingled pity and anger—pity towards herself, anger towards her husband—of the whole female world, pitiful and indignant as the female world is wont to be on such occasions. Every woman in the parish railed at Master Weston ; and poor Master Weston was summoned to attend the bench on the ensuing Saturday, and answer the charge ; and such was the clamour abroad and at home, that the unlucky culprit, terrified at the sound of a warrant and a constable, ran away, and was not heard of for a fortnight.

At the end of that time he was discovered, and brought to the bench ; and Dame Weston again told her story, and, as before, on the full cry. She had no witnesses, and the bruises of which she made complaint had disappeared, and there were no women present to make common cause with the sex. Still, however, the general feeling was against Master Weston ; and it would have gone hard with him when he was called in, if a most unexpected witness had not risen up in his favour. His wife had brought in her arms a little girl about eighteen months old, partly perhaps to move compassion in her favour ;

for a woman with a child in her arms is always an object that excites kind feelings. The little girl had looked shy and frightened, and had been as quiet as a lamb during her mother's examination ; but she no sooner saw her father, from whom she had been a fortnight separated, than she clapped her hands, and laughed, and cried, "Daddy ! daddy !" and sprang into his arms, and hung round his neck, and covered him with kisses—again shouting, "Daddy, come home ! daddy ! daddy !"—and finally nestled her little head in his bosom, with a fulness of contentment, an assurance of tenderness and protection such as no wife-beating tyrant ever did inspire, or ever could inspire, since the days of King Solomon. Our magistrates acted in the very spirit of the Jewish monarch : they accepted the evidence of nature, and dismissed the complaint. And subsequent events have fully justified their decision ; Mistress Weston proving not only renowned for the feminine accomplishment of scolding, (tongue-banging, it is called in our parts, a compound word which deserves to be Greek,) but is actually herself addicted to administering the conjugal discipline, the infliction of which she was pleased to impute to her luckless husband.

Now we cross the stile, and walk up the fields to the Shaw. How beautifully green this pasture looks ! and how finely the evening sun glances between the boles of that clump of trees, beech, and ash, and aspen ! and how sweet the hedge-rows are with woodbine and wild scabious, or, as the country people call it, the gipsy-rose ! Here is little Dolly Weston, the unconscious witness, with cheeks as red as a real rose, tottering up the path to meet her father. And here is the carrotty-poll'd urchin, George Coper, returning from work, and singing "Home ! sweet Home !" at the top of his voice ; and then, when the notes prove too high for him, continuing the air in a whistle, until he has turned the impassable corner ; then taking up again the song and the words, "Home ! sweet Home !" and looking as if he felt their full import, ploughboy though he be. And so he does ; for he is one of a large, an

honest, a kind, and an industrious family, where all goes well, and where the poor ploughboy is sure of finding cheerful faces and coarse comforts—all that he has learned to desire. Oh, to be as cheaply and as thoroughly contented as George Coper! All his luxuries, a cricket-match!—all his wants satisfied in “home! sweet home!”

Nothing but noises to-day! They are clearing Farmer Brooke’s great bean-field, and crying the “Harvest Home!” in a chorus, before which all other sounds—the song, the scolding, the gunnery—fade away, and become faint echoes. A pleasant noise is that! though, for one’s ears’ sake, one makes some haste to get away from it. And here, in happy time, is that pretty wood, the Shaw, with its broad path-way, its tangled dingles, its nuts and its honeysuckles;—and, carrying away a faggot of those sweetest flowers, we reach Hannah Bint’s: of whom, and of whose doings, we shall say more another time.

NOTE.—Poor Dash is also dead. We did not keep him long, indeed I believe that he died of the transition from starvation to good feed, as dangerous to a dog’s stomach and to most stomachs, as the less agreeable change from good feed to starvation. He has been succeeded in place and favour by another Dash, not less amiable in demeanour and far more creditable in appearance, bearing no small resemblance to the pet spaniel of my friend Master Dinely, he who stole the bone from the magpies, and who figures as the first Dash of this volume. Let not the unwary reader opine, that in assigning the same name to three several individuals, I am acting as an humble imitator of the inimitable writer who has given immortality to the Peppers and the Mustards, on the one hand; or showing a poverty of invention or a want of acquaintance with the bead-roll of canine appellations on the other. I merely, with my usual scrupulous fidelity, take the names as I find them. The fact is that half the handsome spaniels in England are called

Dash, just as half the tall footmen are called Thomas. The name belongs to the species. Sitting in an open carriage one day last summer at the door of a farm-house where my father had some business, I saw a noble and beautiful animal of this kind lying in great state and laziness on the steps, and felt an immediate desire to make acquaintance with him. My father, who had had the same fancy, had patted him and called him "poor fellow" in passing, without eliciting the smallest notice in return. "Dash!" cried I at a venture, "good Dash! noble Dash!" and up he started in a moment, making but one spring from the door into the gig. Of course I was right in my guess. The gentleman's name was Dash.

HANNAH BINT.

THE Shaw, leading to Hannah Bint's habitation, is, as I perhaps have said before, a very pretty mixture of wood and coppice; that is to say, a tract of thirty or forty acres covered with fine growing timber—ash, and oak, and elm—very regularly planted; and interspersed here and there with large patches of underwood, hazel, maple, birch, holly, and hawthorn, woven into almost impenetrable thickets by long wreaths of the bramble, the briony, and the brier-rose, or by the pliant and twisting garlands of the wild honeysuckle. In other parts, the Shaw is quite clear of its bosky undergrowth, and clothed only with large beds of feathery fern, or carpets of flowers, primroses, orchises, cowslips, ground-ivy, crane's bill, cotton-grass, Solomon's seal, and forget-me-not, crowded together with a profusion and brilliancy of colour, such as I have rarely seen equalled even in a garden. Here the wild hyacinth really enamels the ground with its fresh and lovely purple; there,

" On aged roots, with bright green mosses clad,
Dwells the wood-sorrel, with its bright thin leaves

Heart-shaped and triply folded, and its root
Creeping like beaded coral ; whilst around
Flourish the copse's pride, anemones,
With rays like golden studs on ivory laid
Most delicate ; but touch'd with purple clouds,
Fit crown for April's fair but changeful brow."

The variety is much greater than I have enumerated ; for the ground is so unequal, now swelling in gentle ascents, now dimpling into dells and hollows, and the soil so different in different parts, that the sylvan Flora is unusually extensive and complete.

The season is, however, now too late for this floweriness ; and except the tufted woodbines, which have continued in bloom during the whole of this lovely autumn, and some lingering garlands of the purple wild veitch, wreathing round the thickets, and uniting with the ruddy leaves of the bramble, and the pale festoons of the briony, there is little to call one's attention from the grander beauties of the trees—the sycamore, its broad leaves already spotted—the oak, heavy with acorns—and the delicate shining rind of the weeping birch, “the lady of the woods,” thrown out in strong relief from a back-ground of holly and hawthorn, each studded with coral berries, and backed with old beeches, beginning to assume the rich tawny hue which makes them perhaps the most picturesque of autumnal trees, as the transparent freshness of their young foliage is undoubtedly the choicest ornament of the forest in spring.

A sudden turn round one of these magnificent beeches brings us to the boundary of the Shaw, and leaning upon a rude gate, we look over an open space of about ten acres of ground, still more varied and broken than that which we have passed, and surrounded on all sides by thick woodland. As a piece of colour, nothing can be well finer. The ruddy glow of the heath-flower, contrasting, on the one hand, with the golden-blossomed furze—on the other, with a patch of buck-

wheat, of which the bloom is not past, although the grain be ripening, the beautiful buck-wheat, whose transparent leaves and stalks are so brightly tinged with vermillion, while the delicate pink-white of the flower, a paler persicaria, has a feathery fall, at once so rich and so graceful, and a fresh and reviving odour, like that of birch trees in the dew of a May evening. The bank that surmounts this attempt at cultivation is crowned with the late fox-glove and the stately mullein; the pasture of which so great a part of the waste consists, looks as green as an emerald; a clear pond, with the bright sky reflected in it, lets light into the picture; the white cottage of the keeper peeps from the opposite coppice; and the vine-covered dwelling of Hannah Bint rises from amidst the pretty garden, which lies bathed in the sunshine around it.

The living and moving accessories are all in keeping with the cheerfulness and repose of the landscape. Hannah's cow grazing quietly beside the keeper's pony; a brace of fat pointer puppies holding amicable intercourse with a litter of young pigs; ducks, geese, cocks, hens, and chickens scattered over the turf; Hannah herself sallying forth from the cottage-door, with her milk-bucket in her hand, and her little brother following with the milking-stool.

My friend, Hannah Bint, is by no means an ordinary person. Her father, Jack Bint, (for in all his life he never arrived at the dignity of being called John, indeed in our parts he was commonly known by the cognomen of London Jack,) was a drover of high repute in his profession. No man, between Salisbury Plain and Smithfield, was thought to conduct a flock of sheep so skilfully through all the difficulties of lanes and commons, streets and high-roads, as Jack Bint, aided by Jack Bint's famous dog, Watch; for Watch's rough, honest face, black, with a little white about the muzzle, and one white ear, was as well known at fairs and markets, as his master's equally honest and weather-beaten visage. Lucky was the dealer that could secure their services; Watch being

renowned for keeping a flock together better than any shepherd's dog on the road—Jack, for delivering them more punctually, and in better condition. No man had a more thorough knowledge of the proper night stations, where good feed might be procured for his charge, and good liquor for Watch and himself; Watch, like other sheep dogs, being accustomed to live chiefly on bread and beer. His master, though not averse to a pot of good double X, preferred gin; and they who plod slowly along, through wet and weary ways, in frost and in fog, have undoubtedly a stronger temptation to indulge in that cordial and reviving stimulus, than we water-drinkers, sitting in warm and comfortable rooms, can readily imagine. For certain, our drover could never resist the gentle seduction of the gin-bottle, and being of a free, merry, jovial temperament, one of those persons commonly called good fellows, who like to see others happy in the same way with themselves, he was apt to circulate it at his own expense, to the great improvement of his popularity, and the great detriment of his finances.

All this did vastly well whilst his earnings continued proportionate to his spendings, and the little family at home were comfortably supported by his industry: but when a rheumatic fever came on, one hard winter, and finally settled in his limbs, reducing the most active and hardy man in the parish to the state of a confirmed cripple, then his reckless improvidence stared him in the face; and poor Jack, a thoughtless, but kind creature, and a most affectionate father, looked at his three motherless children with the acute misery of a parent, who has brought those whom he loves best in the world, to abject destitution. He found help, where he probably least expected it, in the sense and spirit of his young daughter, a girl of twelve years old.

Hannah was the eldest of the family, and had, ever since her mother's death, which event had occurred two or three years before, been accustomed to take the direction of their

domestic concerns, to manage her two brothers, to feed the pigs and the poultry, and to keep house during the almost constant absence of her father. She was a quick, clever lass, of a high spirit, a firm temper, some pride, and a horror of accepting parochial relief, which is every day becoming rarer amongst the peasantry; but which forms the surest safeguard to the sturdy independence of the English character. Our little damsel possessed this quality in perfection; and when her father talked of giving up their comfortable cottage, and removing to the workhouse, whilst she and her brothers must go to service, Hannah formed a bold resolution, and, without disturbing the sick man by any participation of her hopes and fears, proceeded after settling their trifling affairs to act at once on her own plans and designs.

Careless of the future as the poor drover had seemed, he had yet kept clear of debt, and by subscribing constantly to a benefit club, had secured a pittance that might at least assist in supporting him during the long years of sickness and helplessness to which he was doomed to look forward. This his daughter knew. She knew also, that the employer in whose service his health had suffered so severely, was a rich and liberal cattle-dealer in the neighbourhood, who would willingly aid an old and faithful servant, and had, indeed, come forward with offers of money. To assistance from such a quarter Hannah saw no objection. Farmer Oakley and the parish were quite distinct things. Of him, accordingly, she asked, not money, but something much more in his own way—"a cow! any cow! old or lame, or what not, so that it were a cow! she would be bound to keep it well; if she did not, he might take it back again. She even hoped to pay for it by and by, by instalments, but that she would not promise!" and partly amused, partly interested by the child's earnestness, the wealthy yeoman gave her, not as a purchase, but as a present, a very fine young Alderney. She then went to the lord of the manor, and, with equal knowledge of character, begged

his permission to keep her cow on the Shaw common. "Farmer Oakley had given her a fine Alderney, and she would be bound to pay the rent, and keep her father off the parish, if he would only let it graze on the waste;" and he, too, half from real good nature—half, not to be outdone in liberality by his tenant, not only granted the requested permission, but reduced the rent so much, that the produce of the vine seldom fails to satisfy their kind landlord.

Now, Hannah showed great judgment in setting up as a dairy-woman. She could not have chosen an occupation more completely unoccupied, or more loudly called for. One of the most provoking of the petty difficulties which beset people with a small establishment in this neighbourhood, is the trouble, almost the impossibility, of procuring the pastoral luxuries of milk, eggs, and butter, which rank, unfortunately, amongst the indispensable necessities of housekeeping. To your thoroughbred Londoner, who, whilst grumbling over his own breakfast, is apt to fancy that thick cream, and fresh butter, and new-laid eggs, grow, so to say, in the country—form an actual part of its natural produce—it may be some comfort to learn, that in this great grazing district, however the calves and the farmers may be the better for cows, nobody else is; that farmers' wives have ceased to keep poultry; and that we unlucky villagers sit down often to our first meal in a state of destitution, which may well make him content with his thin milk and his Cambridge butter, when compared to our imputed pastoralities.

Hannah's Alderney restored us to one rural privilege. Never was so cleanly a little milk-maid. She changed away some of the cottage finery, which, in his prosperous days, poor Jack had pleased himself with bringing home, the China tea-service, the gilded mugs, and the painted waiters, for the useful utensils of the dairy, and speedily established a regular and gainful trade in milk, eggs, butter, honey, and poultry—for poultry they had always kept.

Her domestic management prospered equally. Her father, who retained the perfect use of his hands, began a manufacture of mats and baskets, which he constructed with great nicety and adroitness; the eldest boy, a sharp and clever lad, cut for him his rushes and osiers; erected, under his sister's direction, a shed for the cow, and enlarged and cultivated the garden (always with the good leave of her kind patron the lord of the manor) until it became so ample, that the produce not only kept the pig, and half kept the family, but afforded another branch of merchandise to the indefatigable directress of the establishment. For the younger boy, less quick and active, Hannah contrived to obtain an admission to the charity-school, where he made great progress—retaining him at home, however, in the hay-making, and leasing season, or whenever his services could be made available, to the great annoyance of the schoolmaster, whose favourite he is, and who piques himself so much on George's scholarship, (your heavy sluggish boy at country work oftens turn out quick at his book,) that it is the general opinion that this much-vaunted pupil will, in process of time, be promoted to the post of assistant, and may, possibly, in course of years, rise to the dignity of a parish pedagogue in his own person; so that his sister, although still making him useful at odd times, now considers George as pretty well off her hands, whilst his elder brother, Tom, could take an under-gardener's place directly, if he were not too important at home to be spared even for a day.

In short, during the five years that she has ruled at the Shaw cottage, the world has gone well with Hannah Bint. Her cow, her calves, her pigs, her bees, her poultry, have each, in their several ways, thriven and prospered. She has even brought Watch to like buttermilk, as well as strong beer, and has nearly persuaded her father (to whose wants and wishes she is most anxiously attentive) to accept of milk as a substitute for gin. Not but Hannah hath had her enemies as well as her betters. Why should she not? The old woman at the

lodge, who always piqued herself on being spiteful, and crying down new ways, foretold from the first she would come to no good, and could not forgive her for falsifying her prediction; and Betty Barnes, the slatternly widow of a tippling farmer, who rented a field, and set up a cow herself, and was universally discarded for insufferable dirt, said all that the wit of an envious woman could devise against Hannah and her Alderney; nay, even Ned Miles, the keeper, her next neighbour, who had whilom held entire sway over the Shaw common, as well as its coppices, grumbled as much as so good-natured and genial a person could grumble, when he found a little girl sharing his dominion, a cow grazing beside his pony, and vulgar cocks and hens hovering around the buck-wheat destined to feed his noble pheasants. Nobody that had been accustomed to see that paragon of keepers, so tall and manly, and pleasant looking, with his merry eye, and his knowing smile, striding gaily along, in his green coat, and his gold-laced hat, with Neptune, his noble Newfoundland dog, (a retriever is the sporting word,) and his beautiful spaniel Flirt at his heels, could conceive how askew he looked, when he first found Hannah and Watch holding equal reign over his old territory, the Shaw common.

Yes! Hannah hath had her enemies; but they are passing away. The old woman at the lodge is dead, poor creature; and Betty Barnes, having herself taken to tippling, has lost the few friends she once possessed, and looks, luckless wretch, as if she would soon die too!—and the keeper?—why, he is not dead, or like to die; but the change that has taken place there is the most astonishing of all—except, perhaps, the change in Hannah herself.

Few damsels of twelve years old, generally a very pretty age, were less pretty than Hannah Bint. Short and stunted in her figure, thin in face, sharp in feature, with a muddled complexion, wild sun-burnt hair, and eyes whose very brightness had in them something startling, over-informed, super-

subtle, too clever for her age,—at twelve years old she had quite the air of a little old fairy. Now, at seventeen, matters are mended. Her complexion has cleared ; her countenance has developed itself ; her figure has shot up into height and lightness, and a sort of rustic grace ; her bright, acute eye is softened and sweetened by the womanly wish to please ; her hair is trimmed, and curled and brushed, with exquisite neatness ; and her whole dress arranged with that nice attention to the becoming, the suitable both in form and texture, which would be called the highest degree of coquetry, if it did not deserve the better name of propriety. Never was such a transmutation beheld. The lass is really pretty, and Ned Miles has discovered that she is so. There he stands, the rogue, close at her side, (for he hath joined her whilst we have been telling her little story, and the milking is over !)—there he stands—holding her milk-pail in one hand, and stroking Watch with the other ; whilst she is returning the compliment, by patting Neptune's magnificent head. There they stand, as much like lovers as may be ; he smiling, and she blushing—he never looking so handsome nor she so pretty in all their lives. There they stand, in blessed forgetfulness of all except each other ; as happy a couple as ever trod the earth. There they stand, and one would not disturb them for all the milk and butter in Christendom. I should not wonder if they were fixing the wedding day.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

Nov. 6th.—The weather is as peaceful to-day, as calm, and as mild, as in early April ; and, perhaps, an autumn afternoon and a spring morning do resemble each other more in feeling, and even in appearance, than any two periods of the year. There is in both the same freshness and dewiness of the herbage ; the same balmy softness in the air ; and the same pure

and lovely blue sky, with white fleecy clouds floating across it. The chief difference lies in the absence of flowers, and the presence of leaves. But then the foliage of November is so rich, and glowing, and varied, that it may well supply the place of the gay blossoms of the spring ; whilst all the flowers of the field or the garden could never make amends for the want of leaves,—that beautiful and graceful attire in which nature has clothed the rugged forms of trees—the verdant drapery to which the landscape owes its loveliness, and the forests their glory.

If choice must be between two seasons, each so full of charm, it is at least no bad philosophy to prefer the present good, even whilst looking gratefully back, and hopefully forward, to the past and the future. And of a surety, no fairer specimen of a November day could well be found than this,—a day made to wander

“ By yellow commons and birch-shaded hollows,
And hedge-rows bordering unfrequented lanes ;”

nor could a prettier country be found for our walk than this shady and yet sunny Berkshire, where the scenery, without rising into grandeur or breaking into wildness, is so peaceful, so cheerful, so varied, and so thoroughly English.

We must bend our steps towards the water side, for I have a message to leave at Farmer Riley's : and sooth to say, it is no unpleasant necessity ; for the road thither is smooth and dry, retired, as one likes a country walk to be, but not too lonely, which women never like ; leading past the Loddon—the bright, brimming, transparent Loddon—a fitting mirror for this bright blue sky, and terminating at one of the prettiest and most comfortable farm-houses in the neighbourhood.

How beautiful the lane is to-day, decorated with a thousand colours ! The brown road, and the rich verdure that borders it, strewed with the pale yellow leaves of the elm, just beginning to fall ; hedge-rows glowing with long wreaths of the bramble in every variety of purplish red ; and overhead the

unchanged green of the fir, contrasting with the spotted sycamore, the tawny beech, and the dry sere leaves of the oak, which rustle as the light wind passes through them ; a few common hardy yellow flowers, (for yellow is the common colour of flowers, whether wild or cultivated, as blue is the rare one,) flowers of many sorts, but almost of one tint, still blowing in spite of the season, and ruddy berries glowing through all. How very beautiful is the lane !

And how pleasant is this hill where the road widens, with the group of cattle by the way-side, and George Hearn, the little post-boy, trundling his hoop at full speed, making all the better haste in his work, because he cheats himself into thinking it play ! And how beautiful, again, is this patch of common at the hill-top with the clear pool, where Martha Pither's children,—elves of three, and four, and five years old,—without any distinction of sex in their sunburnt faces and tattered drapery, are dipping up water in their little homely cups shining with cleanliness, and a small brown pitcher with the lip broken, to fill that great kettle, which, when it is filled, their united strength will never be able to lift ! They are quite a group for a painter, with their rosy cheeks, and chubby hands, and round merry faces ; and the low cottage in the back-ground, peeping out of its vine leaves and china roses, with Martha at the door, tidy, and comely, and smiling, preparing the potatoes for the pot, and watching the progress of dipping and filling that useful utensil, completes the picture.

But we must get on. No time for more sketches in these short days. It is getting cold too. We must proceed in our walk. Dash is showing us the way and beating the thick double hedge-row that runs along the side of the meadows, at a rate that indicates game astir, and causes the leaves to fly as fast as an east-wind after a hard frost. Ah ! a pheasant ! a superb cock pheasant ! Nothing is more certain than Dash's questing, whether in a hedge-row or covert, for a better spaniel never went into the field ; but I fancied that it was a

hare afoot, and was almost as much startled to hear the whirring of those splendid wings, as the princely bird himself would have been at the report of a gun. Indeed, I believe, that the way in which a pheasant goes off, does sometimes make young sportsmen a little nervous, (they don't own it very readily, but the observation may be relied on nevertheless,) until they get as it were broken in to the sound; and then that grand and sudden burst of wing becomes as pleasant to them, as it seems to be to Dash, who is beating the hedge-row with might and main, and giving tongue louder, and sending the leaves about faster than ever—very proud of finding the pheasant, and perhaps a little angry with me for not shooting it; at least looking as if he would be angry if I were a man; for Dash is a dog of great sagacity, and has doubtless not lived four years in the sporting world without making the discovery, that although gentlemen do shoot, ladies do not.

The Loddon at last! the beautiful Loddon! and the bridge, where every one stops, as by instinct, to lean over the rails, and gaze a moment on a landscape of surpassing loveliness,—the fine grounds of the Great House, with their magnificent groups of limes, and firs, and poplars grander than ever poplars were; the green meadows opposite, studded with oaks and elms; the clear winding river; the mill with its picturesque old buildings bounding the scene; all glowing with the rich colouring of autumn, and harmonized by the soft beauty of the clear blue sky, and the delicious calmness of the hour. The very peasant whose daily path it is, cannot cross that bridge without a pause.

But the day is wearing fast, and it grows colder and colder. I really think it will be a frost. After all, spring is the pleasantest season, beautiful as this scenery is. We must get on. Down that broad yet shadowy lane, between the park, dark with evergreens and dappled with deer, and the meadows where sheep, and cows, and horses are grazing under the tall elms; that lane, where the wild bank, clothed with fern, and

tufted with furze, and crowned by rich berried thorn, and thick shining holly on the one side, seems to vie in beauty with the picturesque old paling, the bright laurels, and the plummy cedars, on the other ;—down that shady lane, until the sudden turn brings us to an opening where four roads meet, where a noble avenue turns down to the Great House ; where the village church rears its modest spire from amidst its venerable yew trees ; and where, embosomed in orchards and gardens, and backed by barns and ricks, and all the wealth of the farm-yard, stands the spacious and comfortable abode of good Farmer Riley,—the end and object of our walk.

And in happy time the message is said, and the answer given, for this beautiful mild day is edging off into a dense frosty evening ; the leaves of the elm and the linden in the old avenue are quivering and vibrating and fluttering in the air, and at length falling crisply on the earth, as if Dash were beating for pheasants in the tree tops ; the sun gleams dimly through the fog, giving little more of light or heat than his fair sister the lady moon ;—I don't know a more disappointing person than a cold sun ; and I am beginning to wrap my cloak closely round me, and to calculate the distance to my own fire-side, recanting all the way my praises of November, and longing for the showery, flowery April as much as if I were a half-chilled butterfly, or a dahlia knocked down by the frost.

Ah, dear me ! what a climate this is, that one cannot keep in the same mind about it for half an hour together ! I wonder by the way whether the fault is in the weather, which Dash does not seem to care for, or in me ? If I should happen to be wet through in a shower next spring, and should catch myself longing for autumn, that would settle the question.

HANNAH.

THE prettiest cottage on our village-green is the little dwelling of Dame Wilson. It stands in a corner of the common, where the hedge-rows go curving off into a sort of bay round a clear bright pond, the earliest haunt of the swallow. A deep woody, green lane, such as Hobbima or Ruysdael might have painted, a lane that hints of nightingales, forms one boundary of the garden, and a sloping meadow the other; whilst the cottage itself, a low thatched irregular building, backed by a blooming orchard, and covered with honeysuckle and jessamine, looks like the chosen abode of snugness and comfort. And so it is.

Dame Wilson was a respected servant in a most respectable family, where she passed all the early part of her life, and which she quitted only on her marriage with a man of character and industry, and of that peculiar universality of genius which forms, what is called in country phrase, a handy fellow. He could do any sort of work; was thatcher, carpenter, bricklayer, painter, gardener, gamekeeper, "every thing by turns, and nothing long." No job came amiss to him. He killed pigs, mended shoes, cleaned clocks, doctored cows, dogs, and horses, and even went as far as bleeding and drawing teeth in his experiments on the human subject. In addition to these multifarious talents, he was ready, obliging, and unfearing; jovial withal, and fond of good fellowship; and endowed with a promptness of resource which made him the general adviser of the stupid, the puzzled, and the timid. He was universally admitted to be the cleverest man in the parish; and his death, which happened about ten years ago, in consequence of standing in the water, drawing a pond for one neighbour, at a time

when he was over-heated by loading hay for another, made quite a gap in our village commonwealth. John Wilson had no rival, and has had no successor :—for the Robert Ellis, whom certain youngsters would fain exalt to a co-partnery of fame, is simply nobody—a bell-ringer, a ballad-singer—a troller of profane catches—a fiddler—a bruiser—a loller on alehouse benches—a teller of good stories—a mimic—a poet ! —What is all this to compare with the solid parts of John Wilson ?—Whose clock hath Robert Ellis cleaned ?—whose windows hath he mended ?—whose dog hath he broken ?—whose pigs hath he ringed ?—whose pond hath he fished ?—whose hay hath he saved ?—whose cow hath he cured ?—whose calf hath he killed ?—whose teeth hath he drawn ?—whom hath he bled ? Tell me that, irreverent whipsters ! No ! John Wilson is not to be replaced. He was missed by the whole parish ; and most of all he was missed at home. His excellent wife was left the sole guardian and protector of two fatherless girls ; one an infant at her knee, the other a pretty handy lass about nine years old. Cast thus upon the world, there must have been much to endure, much to suffer ; but it was borne with a smiling patience, a hopeful cheeriness of spirit, and a decent pride, which seemed to command success as well as respect in their struggle for independence. Without assistance of any sort, by needle-work, by washing and mending lace and fine linen, and other skilful and profitable labours, and by the produce of her orchard and poultry, Dame Wilson contrived to maintain herself and her children in their old comfortable home. There was no visible change ; she and the little girls were as neat as ever ; the house had still within and without the same sunshiny cleanliness, and the garden was still famous over all other gardens for its cloves, and stocks, and double wall-flowers. But the sweetest flower of the garden, and the joy and pride of her mother's heart, was her daughter Hannah. Well might she be proud of her ! At sixteen Hannah Wilson was, beyond a doubt,

the prettiest girl in the village, and the best. Her beauty was quite in a different style from the common country rosebud—far more choice and rare. Its chief characteristic was modesty. A light youthful figure, exquisitely graceful and rapid in all its movements; springy, elastic, and bouyant as a bird, and almost as shy; a fair innocent face, with downcast blue eyes, and smiles and blushes coming and going almost with her thoughts; a low soft voice, sweet even in its monosyllables; a dress remarkable for neatness and propriety, and borrowing from her delicate beauty an air of superiority not its own;—such was the outward woman of Hannah. Her mind was very like her person; modest, graceful, gentle, affectionate, grateful, and generous above all. The generosity of the poor is always a very real and fine thing; they give what they want; and Hannah was of all poor people the most generous. She loved to give; it was her pleasure, her luxury. Rosy-cheeked apples, plums with the bloom on them, nosegays of cloves and blossomed myrtle; these were offerings which Hannah delighted to bring to those whom she loved, or those who had shown her kindness; whilst to such of her neighbours as needed other attentions than fruit and flowers, she would give her time, her assistance, her skill; for Hannah inherited her mother's dexterity in feminine employments, with something of her father's versatile power. Besides being an excellent laundress, she was accomplished in all the arts of the needle, millinery, dress-making, and plain work; a capital cutter-out, an incomparable mender, and endowed with a gift of altering, which made old things better than new. She had no rival at a *rifacimento*, as half the turned gowns on the common can witness. As a dairy-woman, and a rearer of pigs and poultry, she was equally successful; none of her ducks and turkeys ever died of neglect or carelessness, or to use the phrase of the poultry-yard on such occasions, of "ill luck." Hannah's fowls never dreamed of sliding out of the world in such an ignoble way; they all lived to be killed, to make a noise at their

deaths, as chickens should do. She was also a famous "scholar;" kept accounts, wrote bills, read letters, and answered them; was a trusty accomptant, and a safe confidante. There was no end to Hannah's usefulness or Hannah's kindness; and her prudence was equal to either. Except to be kind or useful, she never left her home; attended no fairs, or revels, or mayings; went no where but to church; and seldom made a nearer approach to rustic revelry than by standing at her own garden-gate on a Sunday evening, with her little sister in her hand, to look at the lads and lasses on the green. In short, our village beauty had fairly reached her twentieth year without a sweetheart, without the slightest suspicion of her having ever written a love-letter on her own account; when, all on a sudden, appearances changed. She was missing at the "accustomed gate;" and one had seen a young man go into Dame Wilson's; and another had descried a trim, elastic figure walking, not unaccompanied, down the shady lane. Matters were quite clear. Hannah had gotten a lover; and, when poor little Susan, who, deserted by her sister, ventured to peep rather nearer to the gay group, was laughingly questioned on the subject, the hesitating No, and the half Yes, of the smiling child, were equally conclusive.

Since the new marriage act,* we, who belong to country magistrates, have gained a priority over the rest of the parish in matrimonial news. We (the privileged) see on a work-day the names which the sabbath announces to the generality. Many a blushing, awkward pair hath our little lame clerk (a sorry Cupid!) ushered in between dark and light to stammer and hacker, to bow and curtsy, to sign or make a mark, as it pleases Heaven. One Saturday, at the usual hour, the limping clerk made his appearance; and, walking through our little hall, I saw a fine athletic young man, the very image of health and vigour, mental and bodily, holding the hand of a

* It is almost unnecessary to observe, that this little story was written during the short life of that whimsical experiment in legislation.

young woman, who, with her head half buried in a geranium in the window, was turning bashfully away, listening, and yet not seeming to listen, to his tender whispers. The shrinking grace of that bending figure was not to be mistaken. "Hannah!" and she went aside with me, and a rapid series of questions and answers conveyed the story of the courtship. "William was," said Hannah, "a journeyman hatter in B. He had walked over one Sunday evening to see the cricketing, and then he came again. Her mother liked him. Every body liked her William—and she had promised—she was going—was it wrong?"—"Oh no!—and where are you to live?"—"William has got a room in B. He works for Mr. Smith, the rich hatter in the market-place, and Mr. Smith speaks of him—oh, so well! But William will not tell me where our room is. I suppose in some narrow street or lane, which he is afraid I shall not like, as our common is so pleasant. He little thinks—any where."—She stopped suddenly; but her blush and her clasped hands finished the sentence, "any where with him!"—"And when is the happy day?"—"On Monday fortnight, Madam," said the bridegroom elect, advancing with the little clerk to summon Hannah to the parlour, "the earliest day possible." He drew her arm through his, and we parted.

The Monday fortnight was a glorious morning; one of those rare November days when the sky and the air are soft and bright as in April. "What a beautiful day for Hannah!" was the first exclamation of the breakfast table. "Did she tell you where they should dine?"—"No, Ma'am; I forgot to ask."—"I can tell you," said the master of the house, with somewhat of good-humoured importance in his air, somewhat of the look of a man, who, having kept a secret as long as it was necessary, is not sorry to get rid of the burthen. "I can tell you: in London."—"In London!"—"Yes. Your little favourite has been in high luck. She has married the only son of one of the best and richest men in B., Mr. Smith, the great

hatter. It is quite a romance," continued he: "William Smith walked over one Sunday evening to see a match at cricket. He saw our pretty Hannah, and forgot to look at the cricketers. After having gazed his fill, he approached to address her, and the little damsel was off like a bird. William did not like her the less for that, and thought of her the more. He came again and again ; and at last contrived to tame this wild dove, and even to get the *entrée* of the cottage. Hearing Hannah talk is not the way to fall out of love with her. So William, at last finding his case serious, laid the matter before his father, and requested his consent to the marriage. Mr. Smith was at first a little startled ; but William is an only son, and an excellent son ; and, after talking with me, and looking at Hannah, (I believe her sweet face was the more eloquent advocate of the two,) he relented ; and having a spice of his son's romance, finding that he had not mentioned his situation in life, he made a point of its being kept secret till the wedding-day. We have managed the business of settlements ; and William, having discovered that his fair bride has some curiosity to see London, (a curiosity, by the bye, which I suspect she owes to you or poor Lucy,) intends taking her thither for a fortnight. He will then bring her home to one of the best houses in B., a fine garden, fine furniture, fine clothes, fine servants, and more money than she will know what to do with. Really the surprise of Lord E.'s farmer's daughter, when, thinking she had married his steward, he brought her to Burleigh, and installed her as its mistress, could hardly have been greater. I hope the shock will not kill Hannah though, as is said to have been the case with that poor lady."—"Oh no ! Hannah loves her husband too well. Any where with him !"

And I was right. Hannah has survived the shock. She is returned to B., and I have been to call on her. I never saw any thing so delicate and bride-like as she looked in her white gown and her lace mob, in a room light and simple, and tasteful and elegant, with nothing fine except some beautiful green-

house plants. Her reception was a charming mixture of sweetness and modesty, a little more respectful than usual, and far more shame-faced! Poor thing! her cheeks must have pained her! But this was the only difference. In every thing else she is still the same Hannah, and has lost none of her old habits of kindness and gratitude. She was making a handsome matronly cap, evidently for her mother, and spoke, even with tears, of her new father's goodness to her and to Susan. She would fetch the cake and wine herself, and would gather, in spite of all remonstrance, some of her choicest flowers as a parting nosegay. She did, indeed, just hint at her troubles with visitors and servants,—how strange and sad it was! seemed distressed at ringing the bell, and visibly shrank from the sound of a double knock. But, in spite of these calamities, Hannah is a happy woman. The double rap was her husband's; and the glow on her cheek, and the smile of her lips and eyes when he appeared, spoke more plainly than ever, "Any where with him!"

MODERN ANTIQUES.

EARLY in the present century there lived in the ancient town of B. two complete and remarkable specimens of the ladies of eighty years ago—ladies cased inwardly and outwardly in Addison and whalebone. How they had been preserved in this entireness, amidst the collision and ridicule of a country town, seemed as puzzling a question as the preservation of bees in amber, or mummies in pyramids, or any other riddle that serves to amuse the naturalist or the antiquarian. But so it was. They were old maids and sisters, and so alike in their difference from all other women, that they may be best described together; any little non-resemblance may be noted

afterwards ; it was no more than nature, prodigal of variety, would make in two leaves from the same oak-tree.

Both, then, were as short as women well could be without being entitled to the name of dwarf, or carried about to fairs for a show ;—both were made considerably shorter by the highest of all high heels, and the tallest of all tall caps, each of which artificial elevations was as ostentatiously conspicuous as the legs and cover of a pipkin, and served equally to add to the squatness of the real machine ; both were lean, wrinkled, withered, and old ; both enveloped their aged persons in the richest silks, displayed over large hoops, and stays the tightest and stiffest that ever pinched in a beauty of George the Second's reign. The gown was of that make formerly, I believe, called a *sacque*, and of a pattern so enormous, that one flower, with its stalk and leaves, would nearly cover the three quarters of a yard in length, of which the tail might, at a moderate computation, consist. Over this they wore a gorgeously figured apron, whose flourishing white embroidery vied in size with the plants on the robe ; a snowy muslin neckerchief, rigidly pinned down ; and over that a black lace tippet of the same shape, parting at the middle, to display a gay breast-knot. The riband of which this last decoration was composed was generally of the same hue with that which adorned the towering lappeted cap, a sort of poppy colour, which they called *Pompadour*. The sleeves were cut off below the elbows with triple ruffles of portentous length. Brown leather mittens, with peaks turned back, and lined with blue satin, and a variety of tall rings in an odd, out-of-fashion variety of enamelling, and figures of hair, completed the decoration of their hands and arms. The carriage of these useful members was at least equally singular ; they had adapted themselves in a remarkable manner to the little taper wasp-like point in which the waist ended, to which the elbows, ruffles and all, adhered as closely as if they had been glued, whilst the ringed and mittened hands, when not employed in

knitting, were crossed saltier-wise, in front of the apron. The other termination of their figure was adorned with black stuff shoes, very peaked, with points upwards, and massive silver buckles. Their walking costume was, in winter, a black silk cloak lined with rabbit skins, with holes for the arms: in summer, another tippet and a calash:—no bonnet could hold the turreted cap. Their motion out of doors was indescribable; it most nearly resembled sailing. They seemed influenced by the wind in a way incidental to no moving thing, except a ship or a shuttlecock; and, indeed, one boisterous blowing night, about the equinox, when standing on some high stone steps, waiting for a carriage to take her home from a party, the wind did catch one of them, and, but for the intervention of a tall footman, who seized her as one would seize a fly-away umbrella, and held her down by main force, the poor little lady would have been carried up like an air-balloon. Her feelings must have been pretty much similar to those of Gulliver in Brobdignag, when flown away with by the eagle. Half a minute later, and she was gone.

So far they were exact counterparts. The chief variation lay in the face. Amidst the general hue of age and wrinkles, you could just distinguish that Mrs. Theodosia had been brown, and Mrs. Frances fair. There was a yellow shine here and there amongst the white hairs, curiously rolled over a cushion high above the forehead, that told of Fanny's golden locks; whilst the purely grey rouleau of Mrs. Theodosia showed its mixture of black and white still plainer. Mrs. Frances, too, had the blue eye, with a laughing light, which so often retains its flash to extreme age; whilst Mrs. Theodosia's orbs, bright no longer, had once been hazel. Mrs. Theodosia's aquiline nose, and long sociable chin, evinced that disposition to meet which is commonly known by the name of a pair of nut-crackers; Mrs. Frances' features, on the other hand, were rather terse and sharp. Still there was, in spite of these material differences, that look of kindred, that inexplicable and indefin-

able family likeness, which is so frequently found in sisters; greatly increased in the present case by a similarity in the voice that was quite startling. Both tongues were quick and clear, and high and rattling, to a degree that seemed rather to belong to machinery than to human articulation; and when welcomes and how-d'ye-dos were pouring both at once on either side, a stranger was apt to gaze in ludicrous perplexity, as if beset by a ventriloquist, or haunted by strange echoes. When the immediate cackle subsided, they were easily distinguished. Mrs. Theodosia was good, and kind, and hospitable, and social; Mrs. Frances was all that, and was besides shrewd, and clever, and literary, to a degree not very common in her day, though not approaching to the pitch of a blue-stocking lady of the present. Accident was partly the cause of this unusual love of letters. They had known Richardson; had been admitted amongst his flower-garden of young ladies; and still talked familiarly of Miss Highmore, Miss Fielding, Miss Collier, and Miss Mulso,—they had never learned to call her Mrs. Chapone. Latterly the taste had been renewed and quickened, by their having the honour of a distant relationship to one of the most amiable and unfortunate of modern poets. So Mrs. Frances studied novels and poetry, in addition to her sister's sermons and cookery books; though (as she used to boast) without doing a stitch the less of knitting, or playing a pool the fewer in the course of the year. Their usual occupations were those of other useful old ladies; superintending the endowed girls' school of the town with a vigilance and a jealousy of abuses that might have done honour to Mr. Hume; taking an active part in the more private charities, donations of flannel petticoats, or the loan of baby-things; visiting in a quiet way; and going to church whenever the church door was open.

Their abode was a dwelling ancient and respectable, like themselves, that looked as if it had never undergone the slightest variation, inside and out, since they had been born in

it. The rooms were many, low, and small ; full of little windows with little panes, and chimneys stuck perversely in the corners. The furniture was exactly to correspond ; little patches of carpets in the middle of the slippery, dry-rubbed floors ; tables and chairs of mahogany, black with age, but exceedingly neat and bright ; and Japan cabinets and old China, which Mr. Beckford might have envied—treasures which have either never gone out of fashion, or have come in again. The garden was beautiful, and beautifully placed ; a series of terraces descending to rich and finely timbered meadows, through which the slow magnificent Thames rolled under the chalky hills of the pretty village of C. It was bounded on one side by the remains of an old friary, the end wall of a chapel with a Gothic window of open tracery in high preservation, as rich as point lace. It was full too of old-fashioned durable flowers, jessamine, honeysuckle, and the high-scented fraxinella ; I never saw that delicious plant in such profusion. The garden-walks were almost as smooth as the floors, thanks to the two assiduous serving maidens (nothing like a man-servant ever entered this maidenly abode) who attended it. One, the under damsel, was a stout strapping country wench, changed from time to time as it happened ; the other was as much a fixture as her mistresses. She had lived with them for forty years, and, except being twice as big and twice as tall, might have passed for another sister. She wore their gowns, (the two just made her one,) caps, ruffles, and aprons ; talked with their voices and their phrases ; followed them to church, and school, and market ; scolded the school-mistress ; heard the children their Catechism ; cut out flannel petticoats, and knit stockings to give away. Never was so complete an instance of assimilation ! She had even become like them in face.

Having a brother who resided at a beautiful seat in the neighbourhood, and being to all intents and purposes of the patrician order, their visitors were very select, and rather more from the country than the town. Six formed the ge-

neral number,—one table—a rubber or a pool—seldom more. As the only child of a very favourite friend, I used, during the holidays, to be admitted as a supernumerary ; at first out of compliment to mamma ; latterly I stood on my own merits. I was found to be a quiet little girl ; an excellent hander of muffins and cake ; a connoisseur in green tea ; an amateur of quadrille—the most entertaining of all games to a looker-on ; and, lastly and chiefly, a great lover and admirer of certain books, which filled two little shelves at cross- corners with the chimney—namely, that volume of Cowper's Poems which contained John Gilpin, and the whole seven volumes of Sir Charles Grandison. With what delight I used to take down those dear books ! It was an old edition ;—perhaps that very first edition which, as Mrs. Barbauld says, the fine ladies used to hold up to one another at Ranelagh,—and adorned with prints, not certainly of the highest merit as works of art, but which served exceedingly to realize the story, and to make us, as it were, personally acquainted with the characters. The costume was pretty much that of my worthy hostesses, especially that of the two Miss Selbys ; there was even in Miss Nancy's face a certain likeness to Mrs. Frances. I remember I used to wonder whether she carried her elbows in the same way. How I read and believed, and believed and read ; and liked Lady G. though I thought her naughty ; and gave all my wishes to Harriet, though I thought her silly ; and loved Emily with my whole heart ! Clementina I did not quite understand ; nor (I am half afraid to say so) do I now ; and Sir Charles I positively disliked. He was the only thing in the book that I disbelieved. Those bowings seemed incredible. At last, however, I extended my faith even to him ; partly influenced by the irresistibility of the author, partly by the appearance of a real living beau, who in the matter of bowing might almost have competed with Sir Charles himself. This beau was no other than the town member, who, with his brother, was, when in the country, the constant attendant at these chosen parties.

Our member was a man of seventy, or thereabout, but wonderfully young-looking, and well-preserved. It was said, indeed, that no fading belle was better versed in cosmetic secrets, or more devoted to the duties of the toilet. Fresh, upright, unwrinkled, pearly-teethed, and point device in his accoutrements, he might have passed for fifty; and doubtless often did pass for such when apart from his old-looking younger brother; who, tall, lanky, shambling, long-visaged, and loosely dressed, gave a very vivid idea of Don Quixote, when stripped of his armour. Never was so consummate a courtier as our member! Of good family and small fortune, he had early in life been seized with the desire of representing the town in which he resided; and canvassing, sheer canvassing, without eloquence, without talent, without bribery, had brought him in and kept him in. There his ambition stopped. To be a member of parliament was with him not the means but the end of advancement. For forty years he represented an independent borough, and, though regularly voting with every successive ministry, was, at the end of his career, as poor as when he began. He never sold himself, or stood suspected of selling himself—perhaps he might sometimes give himself away. But that he could not help. It was almost impossible for him to say No to any body,—quite so to a minister, or a constituent, or a constituent's wife or daughter. So he passed bowing and smiling through the world, the most disinterested of courtiers, the most subservient of upright men, with little other annoyance than a septennial alarm,—for sometimes an opposition was threatened, and sometimes it came; but then he went through a double course of smirks and hand-shakings, and all was well again. The great grievance of his life must have been the limitation in the number of franks. His apologies, when he happened to be full, were such as a man would make for a great fault; his lamentations, such as might become a great misfortune. Of course there was something ludicrous in his courtliness, but it was not contemptible: it

only wanted to be obviously disinterested to become respectable. The expression might be exaggerated; but the feeling was real. He was always ready to show kindness to the utmost of his power to any human being. He would have been just as civil and supple if he had not been M. P. It was his vocation. He could not help it.

This excellent person was an old bachelor; and there was a rumour, some forty or fifty years old, that in the days of their bloom, there had been a little love affair, an attachment, some even said an engagement, how broken none could tell, between him and Mrs. Frances. Certain it is, that there were symptoms of flirtation still. His courtesy, always gallant to every female, had something more real and more tender towards "Fanny," as he was wont to call her; and Fanny, on her side, was as conscious as heart could desire. She blushed and bridled! fidgeted with her mittens on her apron; flirted a fan nearly as tall as herself, and held her head on one side with that peculiar air which I have noted in the shyer birds, and ladies in love. She manœuvred to get him next her at the tea-table; liked to be his partner at whist; loved to talk of him in his absence; knew to an hour the time of his return; and did not dislike a little gentle raillery on the subject—even I—But, traitress to my sex, how can I jest with such feelings? Rather let me sigh over the world of woe, that in fifty years of hopeless constancy must have passed through that maiden heart! The timid hope; the sickening suspense; the slow, slow fear; the bitter disappointment; the powerless anger; the relenting; the forgiveness; and then again, that interest, kinder, truer, more unchanging than friendship, that lingering woman's love—Oh how can I jest over such feelings? They are passed away—for she is gone, and he—but they clung by her to the last, and ceased only in death.

A GREAT FARM-HOUSE.

THESE are bad times for farmers. I am sorry for it. Independently of all questions of policy, as a mere matter of taste and of old association, it is a fine thing to witness the hearty hospitality, and to think of the social happiness of a great farm-house. No situation in life seemed so richly privileged ; none had so much power for good and so little for evil ; it seemed a place where pride could not live, and poverty could not enter. These thoughts pressed on my mind the other day, in passing the green sheltered lane, overhung with trees like an avenue, that leads to the great farm at M., where, ten or twelve years ago, I used to spend so many pleasant days. I could not help advancing a few paces up the lane, and then turning to lean over the gate, seemingly gazing on the rich undulating valley, crowned with woody hills, which, as I stood under the dark and shady arch, lay bathed in the sunshine before me, but really absorbed in thoughts of other times, in recollections of the old delights of that delightful place, and of the admirable qualities of its owners. How often I had opened the gate, and how gaily—certain of meeting a smiling welcome—and what a picture of comfort it was !

Passing up the lane, we used first to encounter a thick solid suburb of ricks, of all sorts, shapes, and dimensions. Then came the farm, like a town ; a magnificent series of buildings, stables, cart-houses, cow-houses, granaries, and barns, that might hold half the corn of the parish, placed at all angles towards each other, and mixed with smaller habitations for pigs, dogs, and poultry. They formed, together with the old substantial farm-house, a sort of amphitheatre, looking over a beautiful meadow, which swept greenly and abruptly down into fertile enclosures, richly set with hedge-row timber, oak,

and ash, and elm. Both the meadow and the farm-yard swarmed with inhabitants of the earth and of the air ; horses, oxen, cows, calves, heifers, sheep, and pigs ; beautiful greyhounds, all manner of poultry, a tame goat, and a pet donkey.

The master of this land of plenty was well fitted to preside over it ; a thick, stout man, of middle height, and middle aged, with a healthy, ruddy, square face, all alive with intelligence and good-humour. There was a lurking jest in his eye, and a smile about the corners of his firmly closed lips, that gave assurance of good fellowship. His voice was loud enough to have hailed a ship at sea, without the assistance of a speaking-trumpet, wonderfully rich and round in its tones, and harmonizing admirably with his bluff, jovial visage. He wore his dark shining hair combed straight over his forehead, and had a trick, when particularly merry, of stroking it down with his hand. The moment his hand approached his head, out flew a jest.

Besides his own great farm, the business of which seemed to go on like machinery, always regular, prosperous, and unfailing—besides this and two or three constant stewardships, and a perpetual succession of arbitrations, in which, such was the influence of his acuteness, his temper, and his sturdy justice, that he was often named by both parties, and left to decide alone,—in addition to these occupations, he was a sort of standing overseer and church-warden ; he ruled his own hamlet like a despotic monarch, and took a prime minister's share in the government of the large parish to which it was attached ; and one of the gentlemen whose estates he managed, being the independent member of an independent borough, he had every now and then a contested election on his shoulders. Even that did not discompose him. He had always leisure to receive his friends at home, or to visit them abroad ; to take journeys to London, or make excursions to the sea-side ; was as punctual in pleasure as in business, and thought being happy and making happy as much the purpose of his

life as getting rich. His great amusement was coursing. He kept several brace of capital greyhounds, so high-blooded, that I remember when five of them were confined in five different kennels on account of their ferocity. The greatest of living painters once called a greyhound,—"the line of beauty in perpetual motion." Our friend's large dogs were a fine illustration of this remark. His old dog, Hector, for instance, for whom he refused a hundred guineas,—what a superb dog was Hector!—a model of grace and symmetry, necked and crested like an Arabian, and bearing himself with a stateliness and gallantry which showed some "conscience of his worth." He was the largest dog I ever saw; but so finely proportioned, that the most determined fault-finder could call him neither too long nor too heavy. There was not an inch too much of him. His colour was the purest white, entirely unspotted, except that his head was very regularly and richly marked with black. Hector was certainly a perfect beauty. But the little bitches, on which his master piqued himself still more, were not in my poor judgment so admirable. They were pretty little round, graceful things, sleek and glossy, and for the most part milk-white, with the smallest heads, and the most dove-like eyes that were ever seen. There was a peculiar sort of innocent beauty about them, like that of a roly-poly child. They were as gentle as lambs too: all the evil spirit of the family evaporated in the gentlemen. But, to my thinking, these pretty creatures were fitter for the parlour than the field. They were strong, certainly, excellently loined, cat-footed, and chested like a war-horse; but there was a want of length about them—a want of room, as the coursers say; something a little, a very little inclined to the clumsy; a dumpiness, a pointer-look. They went off like an arrow from a bow; for the first hundred yards nothing could stand against them; then they began to flag, to find their weight too much for their speed, and to lose ground from the shortness of the stroke. Up-hill, however, they were capital.

There their compactness told. They turned with the hare and lost neither wind nor way in the sharpest ascent. I shall never forget one single-handed course of our good friend's favourite little bitch Helen, on W. hill. All the coursers were in the valley below, looking up to the hill-side as on a moving picture. I suppose she turned the hare twenty times on a piece of green-sward not much bigger than an acre, and as steep as the roof of a house. It was an old hare, a famous hare, one that had baffled half the dogs in the country ; but she killed him ; and then, though almost as large as herself, took it up in her mouth, brought it to her master, and laid it down at his feet. Oh how pleased he was ! and what a pleasure it was to see his triumph ! He did not always find W. hill so fortunate. It is a high steep hill, of a conical shape, encircled by a mountain road winding up to the summit like a cork-screw,—a deep road dug out of the chalk, and fenced by high mounds on either side. The hares always make for this hollow way, as it is called, because it is too wide for a leap, and the dogs lose much time in mounting and descending the sharp acclivities. Very eager dogs, however, will sometimes dare the leap, and two of our good friend's favourite greyhounds perished in the attempt in two following years. They were found dead in the hollow way. After this he took a dislike to distant coursing meetings, and sported chiefly on his own beautiful farm.

His wife was like her husband, with a difference, as they say in heraldry. Like him in looks, only thinner and paler ; like him in voice and phrase, only not so loud ; like him in merriment and good humour ; like him in her talent of welcoming and making happy, and being kind ; like him in cherishing an abundance of pets, and in getting through with marvellous facility an astounding quantity of business and pleasure. Perhaps the quality in which they resembled each other most completely, was the happy ease and serenity of behaviour, so seldom found amongst people of the middle rank,

who have usually a best manner and a worst, and whose best (that is, the studied, the company manner) is so very much the worst. She was frankness itself; entirely free from prickly defiance, or bristling self-love. She never took offence or gave it; never thought of herself or of what others would think of her; had never been afflicted with the besetting sins of her station, a dread of the vulgar, or an aspiration of the genteel. Those "words of fear" had never disturbed her delightful heartiness.

Her pets were her cows, her poultry, her bees, and her flowers; chiefly her poultry, almost as numerous as the bees, and as various as the flowers. The farm-yard swarmed with peacocks, turkeys, geese, tame and wild ducks, fowls, guineahens, and pigeons; besides a brood or two of favourite bantams in the green court before the door, with a little ridiculous strutter of a cock at their head, who imitated the magnificent demeanour of the great Tom of the barn-yard, just as Tom in his turn copied the fierce bearing of that warlike and terrible biped the he-turkey. I am the least in the world afraid of a turkey-cock, and used to steer clear of the turkery as often as I could. Commend me to the peaceable vanity of that jewel of a bird the peacock, sweeping his gorgeous tail along the grass, or dropping it gracefully from some low-boughed tree, whilst he turns round his crested head with the air of a birthday belle, to see who admires him. What a glorious creature it is! How thoroughly content with himself and with all the world!

Next to her poultry our good farmer's wife loved her flower-garden; and indeed it was of the very first water, the only thing about the place that was fine. She was a real, genuine florist; valued pinks, tulips, and auriculas, for certain qualities of shape and colour, with which beauty has nothing to do; preferred black ranunculuses, and gave into all those obliquities of a triple-refined taste by which the professed florist contrives to keep pace with the vagaries of the Bibliomaniac.

Of all odd fashions, that of dark, gloomy, dingy flowers, appears to me the oddest. Your true *connoisseurs* now shall prefer a deep peuce hollyhock, to the gay pink blossoms which cluster round that splendid plant like a pyramid of roses. So did she. The nomenclature of her garden was more distressing still. One is never thoroughly sociable with flowers till they are naturalized as it were, christened, provided with decent, homely, well-wearing English names. Now her plants had all sorts of heathenish appellations, which—no offence to her learning—always sounded wrong. I liked the bees' garden best; the plot of ground immediately round their hives, filled with common flowers for their use, and literally "redolent of sweets." Bees are insects of great taste in every way, and seem often to select for beauty as much as for flavour. They have a better eye for colour than the florist. The butterfly is also a *dilettante*. Rover though he be, he generally prefers the blossoms that become him best. What a pretty picture it is, in a sunshiny autumn day, to see a bright spotted butterfly, made up of gold and purple and splendid brown, swinging on the rich flower of the china-aster!

To come back to our farm. Within doors every thing went as well as without. There were no fine misses sitting before the piano, and mixing the alloy of their new-fangled tinsel with the old sterling metal; nothing but an only son excellently brought up, a fair slim youth, whose extraordinary and somewhat pensive elegance of mind and manner was thrown into fine relief by his father's loud hilarity, and harmonized delightfully with the smiling kindness of his mother. His Spensers and Thomsons, too, looked well amongst the hyacinths and geraniums that filled the windows of the little snug room in which they usually sat; a sort of after-thought, built at an angle from the house, and looking into the farm-yard. It was closely packed with favourite arm-chairs, favourite sofas, favourite tables, and a side-board decorated with the prize-cups and collars of the greyhounds, and generally loaded

with substantial work-baskets, jars of flowers, great pyramids of home-made cakes, and sparkling bottles of gooseberry-wine, famous all over the country. The walls were covered with portraits of half-a-dozen greyhounds, a brace of spaniels as large as life, an old pony, and the master and mistress of the house in half-length. She as unlike as possible, prim, mincing, delicate, in lace and satin; he so staringly and ridiculously like, that when the picture fixed its good-humoured eyes upon you as you entered the room, you were almost tempted to say—How d’ye do!—Alas! the portraits are now gone, and the originals. Death and distance have despoiled that pleasant home. The garden has lost its smiling mistress; the greyhounds their kind master; and new people, new manners, and new cares, have taken possession of the old abode of peace and plenty—the great farm-house.

LUCY.

ABOUT a twelvemonth ago we had the misfortune to lose a very faithful and favourite female servant; one who has spoiled us for all others. Nobody can expect to meet with two Lucies. We all loved Lucy—poor Lucy! She did not die—she only married; but we were so sorry to part with her, that her wedding, which was kept at our house, was almost as tragical as a funeral, and from pure regret and affection we sum up her merits, and bemoan our loss, just as if she had really departed this life.

Lucy’s praise is a most fertile theme: she united the pleasant and amusing qualities of a French soubrette, with the solid excellence of an Englishwoman of the old school, and was good by contraries. In the first place, she was exceedingly agreeable to look at; remarkably pretty. She lived in our family eleven years; but, having come to us very young, was

still under thirty, just in full bloom, and a very brilliant bloom it was. Her figure was rather tall and rather large, with delicate hands and feet, and a remarkable ease and vigour in her motions; I never saw any woman walk so fast or so well. Her face was round and dimpled, with sparkling grey eyes, black eye-brows and eye-lashes, a profusion of dark hair, very red lips, very white teeth, and a complexion that entirely took away the look of vulgarity which the breadth and flatness of her face might otherwise have given. Such a complexion, so pure, so finely grained, so healthily fair, with such a sweet rosininess, brightening and varying like her dancing eyes whenever she spoke or smiled! When silent, she was almost pale; but, to confess the truth, she was not often silent. Lucy liked talking, and every body liked to hear her talk. There is always great freshness and originality in an uneducated and quick-witted person, who surprises one continually by unsuspected knowledge or amusing ignorance; and Lucy had a real talent for conversation. Her light and pleasant temper, her cleverness, her universal kindness, and the admirable address, or, rather, the excellent feeling, with which she contrived to unite the most perfect respect with the most cordial and affectionate interest, gave a singular charm to her prattle. No confidence or indulgence—and she was well tried with both—ever made her forget herself for a moment. All our friends used to loiter at the door or in the hall to speak to Lucy, and they miss her, and ask for her, as if she were really one of the family. She was not less liked by her equals. Her constant simplicity and right-mindedness kept her always in her place with them as with us; and her gaiety and good-humour made her a most welcome visitor in every shop and cottage round. She had another qualification for village society—she was an incomparable gossip, had a rare genius for picking up news, and great liberality in its diffusion. Births, deaths, marriages, casualties, quarrels, battles, scandal—nothing came amiss to her. She could have furnished a weekly paper from her own

stores of facts, without once resorting for assistance to the courts of law or the two houses of parliament. She was a very charitable reporter too; threw her own sunshine into the shady places, and would hope and doubt as long as either was possible. Her fertility of intelligence was wonderful; and so early! Her news had always the bloom on it: there was no being beforehand with Lucy. It was a little mortifying when one came prepared with something very recent and surprising, something that should have made her start with astonishment, to find her fully acquainted with the story, and able to furnish you with twenty particulars that you had never heard of. But this evil had its peculiar compensation. By Lucy's aid I passed with every body, but Lucy herself, for a woman of great information, an excellent authority, an undoubted reference in all matters of gossip. Now I lag miserably behind the time; I never hear of a death till after the funeral, nor of a wedding till I read it in the papers; and, when people talk of reports and rumours, they undo me. I should be obliged to run away from the tea-tables, if I had not taken the resolution to look wise and say nothing, and live on my old reputation. Indeed, even now, Lucy's fund is not entirely exhausted; things have not quite done happening. I know nothing new; but my knowledge of by-gone passages is absolute; I can prophesy past events like a gipsy.

Scattered amongst her great merits Lucy had a few small faults, as all persons should have. She had occasionally an aptness to take offence where none was intended, and then the whole house bore audible testimony to her displeasure: she used to scour through half-a-dozen doors in a minute, for the mere purpose of banging them after her. She had rather more fears than were quite convenient of ghosts and witches, and thunder, and earwigs, and various other real and unreal sights and sounds, and thought nothing of rousing half the family, in the middle of the night, at the first symptom of a thunder-storm, or an apparition. She had a terrible genius

for music, and a tremendously powerful shrill high voice. Oh ! her door-clapping was nothing to her singing ! it rang through one's head like the screams of a peacock. Lastly, she was a sad flirt ; she had about twenty lovers whilst she lived with us, probably more, but upwards of twenty she acknowledged. Her master, who watched with great amusement this uninterrupted and intricate succession of favourites, had the habit of calling her by the name of the reigning beau—Mrs. Charles, Mrs. John, Mrs. Robert ; so that she has answered in her time to as many masculine appellations as would serve to supply a large family with a “commodity of good names.” Once he departed from this custom, and called her “Jenny Denison.” On her inquiring the reason, he showed her “Old Mortality,” and asked if she could not guess. “Dear me,” said she, “why Jenny Denison had only two !” Amongst Lucy's twenty were three one-eyed lovers, like the three one-eyed calendars in the “Arabian Nights.” They were much about the same period, nearly contemporaries, and one of them had nearly carried off the fair Helen. If he had had two eyes, his success would have been certain. She said yes and no, and yes again ; he was a very nice young man—but that one eye—that unlucky one eye !—and the being rallied on her three calendars. There was no getting over that one eye : she said no, once more, and stood firm. And yet the pendulum might have continued to vibrate many times longer, had it not been fixed by the athletic charms of a gigantic London tailor, a superb man, really ; black-haired, black-eyed, six feet high, and large in proportion. He came to improve the country fashions, and fixed his shop-board in a cottage so near us that his garden was only divided from our lawn by a plantation full of acacias and honeysuckles, where “the air smelt wooingly.” It followed of course that he should make love to Lucy, and that Lucy should listen. All was speedily settled ; as soon as he should be established in a good business, which, from his incomparable talent at cutting out, nobody could doubt, they

were to be married. But they had not calculated on the perversity of country taste; he was too good a workman; his suits fitted over well; his employers missed certain accustomed awkwardnesses and redundancies which passed for beauties; besides, the stiffness and tightness which distinguished the new coat of the *ancien regime*, were wanting in the make of this daring innovator. The shears of our Bond-street cutter were as powerful as the wooden sword of Harlequin; he turned his clowns into gentlemen, and their brother clod-hoppers laughed at them, and they were ashamed. So the poor tailor lost his customers and his credit; and, just as he had obtained Lucy's consent to the marriage, he walked off one fair morning, and was never heard of more. Lucy's absorbing feeling on this catastrophe was astonishment, pure, unmixed astonishment! One would have thought that she considered fickleness as a female privilege, and had never heard of a man deserting a woman in her life. For three days she could only wonder; then came great indignation, and a little, a very little grief, which showed itself not so much in her words, which were chiefly such disclaimers as "I don't care! very lucky! happy escape!" and so on, as in her goings and doings, her aversion to the poor acacia grove, and even to the sight and smell of honeysuckles, her total loss of memory, and above all, in the distaste she showed to new conquests. She paid her faithless suitor the compliment of remaining loverless for three weary months; and even when she relented a little, she admitted no fresh adorer, nothing but an old hanger-on; one not quite discarded during the tailor's reign; one that had dangled after her during the long courtship of the three calendars; one who was the handiest and most complaisant of wooers, always ready to fill up any interval, like a book which can be laid aside when company comes in, and resumed a month afterwards at the very page and line where the reader left off. I think it was an affair of amusement and convenience on both sides. Lucy never intended to marry this commodious stopper of

love-gaps ; and he, though he courted her for ten mortal years, never made a direct offer, till after the banns were published between her and her present husband : then, indeed, he said he was sorry—he had hoped—was it too late ? and so forth. Ah ! his sorrow was nothing to ours, and, when it came to the point, nothing to Lucy's. She cried every day for a fortnight, and had not her successor in office, the new housemaid, arrived, I do really believe that this lover would have shared the fate of the many successors to the unfortunate tailor.

I hope that her choice has been fortunate ; it is certainly very different from what we all expected. The happy man had been a neighbour, (not on the side of the acacia trees,) and on his removal to a greater distance the marriage took place. Poor dear Lucy ! her spouse is the greatest possible contrast to herself ; ten years younger at the very least ; well-looking, but with no expression good or bad—I don't think he could smile if he would—assuredly he never tries ; well made, but as stiff as a poker ; I dare say he never ran three yards in his life ; perfectly steady, sober, honest, and industrious ; but so young, so grave, so dull ! one of your "demure boys," as Falstaff calls them, "that never come to proof." You might guess a mile off that he was a school-master, from the swelling pomposity of gait, the solemn decorum of manner, the affectation of age and wisdom, which contrast so oddly with his young unmeaning face. The moment he speaks you are certain. Nobody but a village pedagogue ever did or ever could talk like Mr. Brown,—ever displayed such elaborate politeness, such a study of phrases, such choice words and long words, and fine words and hard words. He speaks by the book,—the spelling-book, and is civil after the fashion of the Polite Letter-Writer. He is so entirely without tact, that he does not in the least understand the impression produced by his wife's delightful manners, and interrupts her perpetually, to speechify and apologize, and explain and amend. He is fond of her, nevertheless, in his own cold slow way, and

proud of her, and grateful to her friends, and a very good kind of young man altogether ; only that I cannot quite forgive him for taking Lucy away in the first place, and making her a school-mistress in the second. She a school-mistress, a keeper of silence, a maintainer of discipline, a scolder, a punisher ! Ah ! she would rather be scolded herself ; it would be a far lighter punishment. Lucy likes her vocation as little as I do. She has not the natural love of children, which would reconcile her to the evils they cause ; and she has a real passion for cleanliness, a fiery spirit of despatch, which cannot endure the dust and litter created by the little troop on the one hand, or their tormenting slowness and stupidity on the other. She was the quickest and neatest of work-women, piqued herself on completing a shirt or a gown sooner and better than seemed possible, and was scandalized at finding such talents degraded to the ignoble occupations of tacking a quarter of a yard of hemming for one, pinning half a seam for another, picking out the crooked stitching of a third, and working over the weak irregular burst-out button-hole of a fourth. When she first went to S——, she was strongly tempted to do all the work herself. “The children would have liked it,” said she, “and really I don’t think the mothers would have objected ; they care for nothing but marking. There are seven girls now in the school working samplers to be framed. Such a waste of silk, and time, and trouble ! I said to Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Smith said to me.” —Then she recounted the whole battle of the samplers, and her defeat ; and then she sent for one which, in spite of her declaration that her girls never finished any thing, was quite completed, (probably with a good deal of her assistance,) and of which, notwithstanding her rational objection to its uselessness, Lucy was not a little proud. She held it up with great delight, pointed out all the beauties, selected her own favourite parts, especially a certain square rose-bud, and the landscape at the bottom ; and finally pinned it against the

wall, to show the effect that it would have when framed. Really, that sampler was a superb thing in its way. First came a plain pink border ; then a green border, zig-zag ; then a crimson, wavy ; then a brown, of a different and more complicated zig-zag ; then the alphabet, great and small, in every colour of the rainbow, followed by a row of figures, flanked on one side by a flower, name unknown, tulip, poppy, lily,—something orange or scarlet, or orange-scarlet ; on the other by the famous rose-bud ; then divers sentences, religious and moral ;—Lucy was quite provoked with me for not being able to read them ; I dare say she thought in her heart that I was as stupid as any of her scholars ; but never was MS. so illegible, not even my own, as the print-work of that sampler ;—then, last and finest, the landscape, in all its glory. It occupied the whole narrow line at the bottom, and was composed with great regularity. In the centre was a house of a bright scarlet, with yellow windows, a green door, and a blue roof : on one side, a man with a dog ; on the other, a woman with a cat—this is Lucy's information ; I should never have guessed that there was any difference, except in colour, between the man and the woman, the dog and the cat ; they were in form, height, and size, alike to a thread ; the man grey, the woman pink, his attendant white, and hers black. Next to these figures, on either side, rose two fir-trees from two red flower-pots, nice little round bushes of a bright green intermixed with brown stitches, which Lucy explained, not to me.—“Don't you see the fir-cones, Sir ? Don't you remember how fond she used to be of picking them up in her little basket at the dear old place ? Poor thing, I thought of her all the time that I was working them ! Don't you like the fir-cones ?”——After this, I looked at the landscape almost as lovingly as Lucy herself.

With all her dislike to keeping school, the dear Lucy seems happy. In addition to the merciful spirit of conformity, which shapes the mind to the situation, whatever that may be, she

has many sources of vanity and comfort—her house above all. It is a very respectable dwelling, finely placed on the edge of a large common, close to a high-road, with a pretty flower-court before it, shaded by four horse-chesnuts cut into arches, a sashed window on either side of the door, and on the door a brass knocker, which, being securely nailed down, serves as a quiet peaceable handle of all goers, instead of the importunate and noisy use for which it was designed. Jutting out at one end of the court is a small stable; retiring back at the other, a large school-room, and behind, a yard for children, pigs, and poultry, a garden, and an arbour. The inside is full of comfort; miraculously clean and orderly for a village school, and with a little touch of very allowable finery in the gay window-curtains, the cupboard full of pretty china, the handsome chairs, the bright mahogany table, the shining tea-urn, and brilliant tea-tray, that decorate the parlour. What a pleasure it is to see Lucy presiding in that parlour, in all the glory of her honest affection and warm hospitality, making tea for the three guests whom she loves best in the world, vaunting with courteous pride her home-made bread and her fresh butter, yet thinking nothing good enough for the occasion; smiling and glowing, and looking the very image of beautiful happiness.—Such a moment almost consoles us for losing her.

Lucy's pleasure is in her house; mine is in its situation. The common on which it stands is one of a series of heathy hills, or rather a high table-land, pierced in one part by a ravine of marshy ground filled with alder bushes, growing larger and larger as the valley widens, and at last mixing with the fine old oaks of the forest of P——. Nothing can be more delightful than to sit on the steep brow of the hill, amongst the fragrant heath-flowers, the blue-bells, and the wild thyme, and look upon the sea of trees spreading out beneath us; the sluggish water just peeping from amid the alders, giving brightly back the bright blue sky; and, farther down, herds of rough ponies, and of small stunted cows, the wealth of the

poor, coming up from the forest. I have sometimes seen two hundred of these cows together, each belonging to a different person, and distinguishing and obeying the call of its milker. All the boundaries of this heath are beautiful. On one side is the hanging coppice, where the lily of the valley grows so plentifully amongst broken ridges and fox-earths, and the roots of pollard-trees. On another are the immense fir plantations of Mr. B., whose balmy odour hangs heavily in the air, or comes sailing on the breeze like smoke across the landscape. Farther on, beyond the pretty parsonage-house, with its short avenue, its fish-ponds, and the magnificent poplars which form a landmark for many miles round, rise the rock like walls of the old city of S——, one of the most perfect Roman remains now existing in England. The wall can be traced all round, rising sometimes to a height of twenty feet, over a deep narrow slip of meadow land, once the ditch, and still full of aquatic flowers. The ground within rises level with the top of the wall, which is of grey stone, crowned with the finest forest trees, whose roots seem interlaced with the old masonry, and covered with wreaths of ivy, brambles, and a hundred other trailing plants. Close by one of the openings, which mark the site of the gates, is a graduated terrace, called by antiquaries the Amphitheatre, which commands a rich and extensive view, and is backed by the village church, and an old farm-house,—the sole buildings in that once populous city, whose streets are now traced only by the blighted and withered appearance of the ripening corn. Roman coins and urns are often ploughed up there, and it is a favourite haunt of the lovers of “hoar antiquity.” But the beauty of the place is independent even of its noble associations. The very heart expands in the deep verdure and perfect loneliness of that narrow winding valley, fenced on one side by steep coppices or its own tall irregular hedge, on the other by the venerable crag-like wall, whose proud coronet of trees, its jutting ivy, its huge twisted thorns, its briery festoons, and the deep caves where the rabbits

burrow, make the old bulwark seem no work of man, but a majestic piece of nature. As a picture it is exquisite. Nothing can be finer than the mixture of those varied greens, so crisp and life-like, with the crumbling grey stone; nothing more perfectly in harmony with the solemn beauty of the place, than the deep cooings of the wood-pigeons, who abound in the walls. I know no pleasure so intense, so soothing, so apt to bring sweet tears into the eyes, or to awaken thoughts that "lie too deep for tears," as a walk round the old city on a fine summer evening. A ride to S—— was always delightful to me, even before it became the residence of Lucy; it is now my prime festival.

BRAMLEY MAYING.

MR. GEOFFREY CRAYON has, in his delightful but somewhat fanciful writings, brought into general view many old sports and customs, some of which, indeed, still linger about the remote counties, familiar as local peculiarities to their inhabitants, whilst the greater part lie buried in books of the Elizabethan age, known only to the curious in English literature. One rural custom which would have enchanted him, and which prevails in the north of Hampshire, he has not noticed, and probably does not know. Did any of my readers ever hear of a Maying? Let not any notions of chimney-sweeps soil the imagination of the gay Londoner! A country Maying is altogether a different affair from the street exhibitions which mix so much pity with our mirth, and do the heart good, perhaps, but not by gladdening it. A country Maying is a meeting of the lads and lasses of two or three parishes, who assemble in certain erections of green boughs called May-houses, to dance and——but I am going to tell all about it in due order and must not forestall my description.

Last year we went to Bramley Maying. There had been two or three such merry-makings before in that inaccessible neighbourhood, where the distance from large towns, the absence of great houses, and the consequent want of all decent roads, together with a country of peculiar wildness and beauty, combine to produce a sort of modern Arcadia. We had intended to assist at a Maying in the forest of Pamber, thinking that the deep glades of that fine woodland scenery would be more congenial to the spirit of our English merriment, as it breathed more of Robin Hood and Maid Marian than a mere village green—to say nothing of its being of the two more accessible by four-footed and two-wheeled conveyances. But the Pamber day had been suffered to pass, and Bramley was the last Maying of the season. So to Bramley we went.

As we had a considerable distance to go, we set out about noon, intending to return to dinner at six. Never was a day more congenial to a happy purpose! It was a day made for country weddings and dances on the green—a day of dazzling light, of ardent sunshine falling on hedge-rows and meadows fresh with spring showers. You might almost see the grass grow and the leaves expand under the influence of that vivifying warmth; and we passed through the well-known and beautiful scenery of W. Park, and the pretty village of M., with a feeling of new admiration, as if we had never before felt their charms; so gloriously did the trees in their young leaves, the grass springing beneath them, the patches of golden broom and deeper furze, the cottages covered with roses, the blooming orchards, and the light snowy sprays of the cherry trees tossing their fair blossoms across the deep blue sky, pour upon the eye the full magic of colour. On we passed gaily and happily as far as we knew our way—perhaps a little farther, for the place of our destination was new to both of us, when we had the luck, good or bad, to meet with a director in the person of the butcher of M. My companion is known to most people within a circuit of ten miles; so we had ready

attention and most civil guidance from the man of beef and mutton—a prodigious person, almost as big as a prize ox, as rosy and jovial-looking as Falstaff himself, who was standing in the road with a slender shrewd-looking boy, apt and ready enough to have passed for the page. He soon gave us the proper, customary, and unintelligible directions as to lanes and turnings—first to the right, then to the left, then round Farmer Jennings' close, then across the Holy Brook, then to the right again—till at last seeing us completely bewildered, he offered to send the boy, who was going our way for half a mile to carry out a shoulder of veal, to attend us to that distance as a guide; an offer gratefully accepted by all parties, especially the lad, whom we relieved of his burden and took up behind, where he swung in an odd but apparently satisfactory posture, between running and riding. While he continued with us, we fell into no mistakes; but at last he and the shoulder of veal reached their place of destination; and after listening to a repetition, or perhaps a variation, of the turns right and left which were to conduct us to Bramley-green, we and our little guide parted.

On we went, twisting and turning through a labyrinth of lanes, getting deeper and deeper every moment, till at last, after many doubtings, we became fairly convinced that we had lost our way. Not a soul was in the fields; not a passenger in the road; not a cottage by the road-side: so on we went—I am afraid to say how far, (for when people have lost their way, they are not the most accurate measurers of distance)—till we came suddenly on a small farm-house, and saw at once that the road we had trodden led to that farm, and thither only. The solitary farm-house had one solitary inmate, a smiling middle-aged woman, who came to us and offered her services with the most alert civility:—"All her boys and girls were gone to the Maying," she said, "and she remained to keep house."—"The Maying! We are near Bramley then?"—"Only two miles the nearest way across the

fields—were we going?—she would see to the horse—we should soon be there, only over that stile, and then across that field, and then turn to the right, and then take the next turning—no! the next but one to the left.”—Right and left again for two miles over those deserted fields!—Right and left! we shuddered at the words. “Is there no carriage-road?—Where are we?”—“At Silchester, close to the walls, only half a mile from the church.”—“At Silchester!” and in ten minutes we had said a thankful farewell to our kind informant, had retraced our steps a little, had turned up another lane, and found ourselves at the foot of that commanding spot which antiquaries call the amphitheatre, close under the walls of the Roman city, and in full view of an old acquaintance, the schoolmaster of Silchester, who happened to be there in his full glory, playing the part of Cicerone to a party of ladies, and explaining far more than he knows, or than any one knows, of streets, and gates, and sites of temples, which, by the bye, the worthy pedagogue usually calls parish churches. I never was so glad to see him in my life, never thought he could have spoken with so much sense and eloquence as were comprised in the two words, “straight forward,” by which he answered our inquiry as to the road to Bramley.

And forward we went by a way beautiful beyond description: a road bounded on one side by every variety of meadow, and corn-field, and rich woodland; on the other by the rock-like walls of the old city, crowning an abrupt magnificent bank of turf, broken by fragments, crags as it were, detached from the ruin, and young trees, principally ash, with silver stems standing out in picturesque relief from the green slope, and itself crowned with every sort of vegetation, from the rich festoons of brier and ivy, which garlanded its side, to the venerable oaks and beeches which nodded on its summit. I never saw any thing so fine in my life. To be sure, we nearly broke our necks. Even I, who, having been overset astonish-

ingly often, without any harm happening, have acquired, from frequency of escape, the confidence of escaping, and the habit of not caring for that particular danger, which is, I suppose, what in a man, and in battle, would be called courage; even I was glad enough to get out, and do all I could towards wriggling the gig round the rock-like stones, or sometimes helping to lift the wheel over the smaller impediments. We escaped that danger, and left the venerable walls behind us.—But I am losing my way here too; I must loiter on the road no longer. Our other delays of a broken bridge—a bog—another wrong turning—and a meeting with a loaded waggon, in a lane too narrow to pass—all this must remain untold.

At last we reached a large farm-house at Bramley; another mile remained to the Green, but that was impassable. Nobody thinks of riding at Bramley. The late lady of the manor, when at rare and uncertain intervals she resided for a few weeks at her house of B. R., used, in visiting her only neighbour, to drive her coach and four through her farmers' ploughed fields. We must walk: but the appearance of gay crowds of rustics, all passing along one path, gave assurance that this time we should not lose our way. Oh, what a pretty path it was! along one sunny sloping field, up and down, dotted with trees like a park; then across a deep shady lane, with cows loitering and cropping grass from the banks; then up a long narrow meadow, in the very pride and vigour of its greenness, richly bordered by hedgerow timber, and terminating in the church-yard, and a little country church.

Bramley church is well worth seeing. It contains that rare thing, a monument fine in itself, and finer in its situation. We had heard of it, and in spite of the many delays we had experienced, could not resist the temptation of sending one of the loiterers, who seemed to stand in the church-yard as a sort of out-guard to the Maying, to the vicar's house for the key. Prepared as we had been to see something unusual, we were very much struck. The church is small, simple, decaying,

almost ruinous; but, as you turn from the entrance into the centre aisle, and advance up to the altar, your eye falls on a lofty recess, branching out like a chapel on one side, and seen through a Gothic arch. It is almost paved with monumental brasses of the proud family of B., who have possessed the surrounding property from the time of the Conqueror; and in the centre of the large open space stands a large monument, surrounded by steps, on which reclines the figure of a dying man, with a beautiful woman leaning over him, full of a lovely look of anxiety and tenderness. The figures are very fine; but that which makes the grace and glory of this remarkable piece of sculpture, is its being backed by an immense Gothic window, nearly the whole size of the recess, entirely composed of old stained glass. I do not know the story which the artist, in the series of pictures, intended to represent; but there they are, the gorgeous, glorious colours—reds, and purples, and greens, glowing like an anemone bed in the sunshine, or like one of the windows made of amethysts and rubies in the Arabian Tales, and throwing out the monumental figures with an effect almost magical. The parish clerk was at the Maying, and we had only an unlettered rustic to conduct us, so that I do not even know the name of the sculptor—he must have a strange mingled feeling if ever he saw his work in its present home—delight that it looks so well, and regret that there is no one to look at it. That monument alone was worth losing our way for.

But cross two fields more, and up a quiet lane, and we are at the Maying, announced afar off by the merry sound of music, and the merrier clatter of childish voices. Here we are at the green; a little turfy spot, where three roads meet, close shut in by hedge-rows, with a pretty white cottage, and its long slip of a garden at one angle. I had no expectation of scenery so compact, so like a glade in a forest; it is quite a cabinet picture, with green trees for the frame. In the midst grows a superb horse-chesnut, in the full glory of its

flowery pyramids, and from the trunk of the chesnut the May-houses commence. They are covered alleys built of green boughs, decorated with garlands and great bunches of flowers, the gayest that blow—lilacs, Guelder-roses, pionies, tulips, stocks—hanging down like chandeliers among the dancers; for of dancers, gay dark-eyed young girls in straw bonnets and white gowns, and their lovers in their Sunday attire, the May-houses were full. The girls had mostly the look of extreme youth, and danced well and quietly like ladies—too much so: I should have been glad to see less elegance and more enjoyment; and their partners, though not altogether so graceful, were as decorous and as indifferent as real gentlemen. It was quite like a ball-room, as pretty and almost as dull. Outside was the fun. It is the outside, the upper gallery of the world, that has that good thing. There were children laughing, eating, trying to cheat, and being cheated, round an ancient and practised vender of oranges and gingerbread; and on the other side of the tree lay a merry group of old men, in coats almost as old as themselves, and young ones in no coats at all, excluded from the dance by the disgrace of a smock-frock. Who would have thought of etiquette finding its way into the May-houses! That group would have suited Teniers; it smoked and drank a little, but it laughed a great deal more. There were a few decent matronly-looking women, too, sitting in a cluster; and young mothers strolling about with infants in their arms; and ragged boys peeping through the boughs at the dancers; and the bright sun shining gloriously on all this innocent happiness. Oh what a pretty sight it was!—worth losing our way for—worth losing our dinner—both which events happened; whilst a party of friends, who were to have joined us, were far more unlucky; for they not only lost their way and their dinner, but rambled all day about the country, and never reached Bramley Maying.

COUSIN MARY.

ABOUT four years ago, passing a few days with the highly educated daughters of some friends in this neighbourhood, I found domesticated in the family a young lady, whom I shall call as they called her, Cousin Mary. She was about eighteen, not beautiful, perhaps, but lovely certainly to the fullest extent of that loveliest word—as fresh as a rose ; as fair as a lily ; with lips like winter berries ; dimpled, smiling lips ; and eyes of which nobody could tell the colour, they danced so incessantly in their own gay light. Her figure was tall, round, and slender ; exquisitely well proportioned it must have been, for in all attitudes (and in her innocent gaiety she was scarcely ever two minutes in the same) she was grace itself. She was, in short, the very picture of youth, health, and happiness. No one could see her without being prepossessed in her favour. I took a fancy to her the moment she entered the room ; and it increased every hour in spite of, or rather perhaps for, certain deficiencies, which caused poor Cousin Mary to be held exceedingly cheap by her accomplished relatives.

She was the youngest daughter of an officer of rank, dead long ago ; and his sickly widow having lost by death, or that other death, marriage, all her children but this, could not, from very fondness, resolve to part with her darling for the purpose of acquiring the commonest instruction. She talked of it, indeed, now and then, but she only talked ; so that, in this age of universal education, Mary C. at eighteen exhibited the extraordinary phenomenon of a young woman of high family, whose acquirements were limited to reading, writing, needle-work, and the first rules of arithmetic. The effect of this let-alone system, combined with a careful seclusion from

all improper society, and a perfect liberty in her country rambles, acting upon a mind of great power and activity, was the very reverse of what might have been predicted. It had produced not merely a delightful freshness and originality of manner and character, a piquant ignorance of those things of which one is tired to death, but knowledge, positive, accurate, and various knowledge. She was, to be sure, wholly unaccomplished ; knew nothing of quadrilles, though her every motion was dancing ; nor a note of music, though she used to warble like a bird sweet snatches of old songs, as she skipped up and down the house ; nor of painting, except as her taste had been formed by a minute acquaintance with nature into an intense feeling of art. She had that real extra sense, an eye for colour, too, as well as an ear for music. Not one in twenty—not one in a hundred of our sketching and copying ladies could love and appreciate a picture where there was colour and mind, a picture by Claude, or by our English Claudes, Wilson and Hoffland, as she could—for she loved landscape best, because she understood it best—it was a portrait of which she knew the original. Then her needle was in her hands almost a pencil. I never knew such an embroidress—she would sit “printing her thoughts on lawn,” till the delicate creation vied with the snowy tracery, the fantastic carving of hoar frost, the richness of Gothic architecture, or of that which so much resembles it, the luxuriant fancy of old point lace. That was her only accomplishment, and a rare artist she was—muslin and net were her canvass. She had no French either, not a word ; no Italian ; but then her English was racy, unhackneyed, proper to the thought to a degree that only original thinking could give. She had not much reading, except of the Bible, and Shakspeare, and Richardson’s novels, in which she was learned ; but then her powers of observation were sharpened and quickened, in a very unusual degree, by the leisure and opportunity afforded for their development at a time of life when they are most

acute. She had nothing to distract her mind. Her attention was always awake and alive. She was an excellent and curious naturalist, merely because she had gone into the fields with her eyes open ; and knew all the details of rural management, domestic or agricultural, as well as the peculiar habits and modes of thinking of the peasantry, simply because she had lived in the country, and made use of her ears. Then she was fanciful, recollective, new ; drew her images from the real objects, not from their shadows in books. In short, to listen to her, and the young ladies her companions, who, accomplished to the height, had trodden the education-mill till they all moved in one step, had lost sense in sound, and ideas in words, was enough to make us turn masters and governesses out of doors, and leave our daughters and grand-daughters to Mrs. C.'s system of non-instruction. I should have liked to meet with another specimen, just to ascertain whether the peculiar charm and advantage arose from the quick and active mind of this fair Ignorant, or was really the natural and inevitable result of the training ; but, alas ! to find more than one unaccomplished young lady, in this accomplished age, is not to be hoped for. So I admired and envied ; and her fair kinswomen pitied and scorned, and tried to teach ; and Mary, never made a learner, and as full of animal spirits as a school-boy in the holidays, sang, and laughed, and skipped about from morning till night.

It must be confessed, as a counter-balance to her other perfections, that the dear Cousin Mary was, as far as great natural modesty and an occasional touch of shyness would let her, the least in the world of a romp ! She loved to toss about children, to jump over stiles, to scramble through hedges, to climb trees ; and some of her knowledge of plants and birds may certainly have arisen from her delight in these boyish amusements. And which of us has not found that the strongest, the healthiest, and most flourishing acquirement has arisen from pleasure or accident, has been in a manner self-sown,

like an oak of the forest?—Oh, she was a sad romp ; as skittish as a wild colt, as uncertain as a butterfly, as uncatchable as a swallow ! But her great personal beauty, the charm, grace, and lightness of her movements, and, above all, her evident innocence of heart, were bribes of indulgence which no one could withstand. I never heard her blamed by any human being. The perfect unrestraint of her attitudes, and the exquisite symmetry of her form, would have rendered her an invaluable study for a painter. Her daily doings would have formed a series of pictures. I have seen her scudding through a shallow rivulet, with her petticoats caught up just a little above the ankle, like a young Diana, and a bounding, skimming, enjoying motion, as if native to the element, which might have become a Naiad. I have seen her on the topmost round of a ladder, with one foot on the roof of a house, flinging down the grapes that no one else had nerve enough to reach, laughing, and garlanded, and crowned with vine-leaves, like a Bacchante. But the prettiest combination of circumstances under which I ever saw her, was driving a donkey-cart up a hill, one sunny windy day in September. It was a gay party of young women, some walking, some in open carriages of different descriptions, bent to see a celebrated prospect from a hill called the Ridges. The ascent was by a steep narrow lane, cut deeply between sand-banks, crowned with high, feathery hedges. The road and its picturesque banks lay bathed in the golden sunshine, whilst the autumnal sky, intensely blue, appeared at the top as through an arch. The hill was so steep that we had all dismounted, and left our different vehicles in charge of the servants below ; but Mary, to whom, as incomparably the best charioteer, the conduct of a certain non-descript machine, a sort of donkey currie, had fallen, determined to drive a delicate little girl, who was afraid of the walk, to the top of the eminence. She jumped out for the purpose, and we followed, watching and admiring her as she won her way up the hill : now tugging

at the donkeys in front, with her bright face towards them and us, and springing along backwards—now pushing the chaise from behind—now running by the side of her steeds, patting and caressing them—now soothing the half-frightened child—now laughing, nodding, and shaking her little whip at us—darting about like some winged creature—till at last she stopped at the top of the ascent, and stood for a moment on the summit, her straw bonnet blown back, and held on only by the strings; her brown hair playing on the wind in long natural ringlets; her complexion becoming every moment more splendid from exertion, redder and whiter; her eyes and her smile brightening and dimpling; her figure in its simple white gown, strongly relieved by the deep blue sky, and her whole form seeming to dilate before our eyes. There she stood under the arch formed by two meeting elms, a Hebe, a Psyche, a perfect goddess of youth and joy. The Ridges are very fine things altogether, especially the part to which we were bound, a turfy breezy spot, sinking down abruptly like a rock into a wild fore-ground of heath and forest, with a magnificent command of distant objects;—but we saw nothing that day like the figure on the top of the hill.

After this I lost sight of her for a long time. She was called suddenly home by the dangerous illness of her mother, who, after languishing for some months, died; and Mary went to live with a sister much older than herself, and richly married, in a manufacturing town, where she languished in smoke, confinement, dependence, and display, (for her sister was a match-making lady, a *manceuvrer*,) for about a twelvemonth. She then left her house and went into Wales—as a governess! Imagine the astonishment caused by this intelligence amongst us all; for I myself, though admiring the untaught damsel almost as much as I loved her, should certainly never have dreamed of her as a teacher. However, she remained in the rich baronet's family where she had commenced her employment. They liked her apparently,—there she was; and again

nothing was heard of her for many months, until, happening to call on the friends at whose house I had originally met her, I espied her fair blooming face, a rose amongst roses, at the drawing-room window,—and instantly with the speed of light was met and embraced by her at the hall-door.

There was not the slightest perceptible difference in her deportment. She still bounded like a fawn, and laughed and clapped her hands like an infant. She was not a day older, or graver, or wiser, since we parted. Her post of tutoress had at least done *her* no harm, whatever might have been the case with her pupils. The more I looked at her the more I wondered; and after our mutual expressions of pleasure had a little subsided, I could not resist the temptation of saying,—“So you are really a governess?”—“Yes.”—“And you continue in the same family?”—“Yes.”—“And you like your post?”—“O yes! yes!”—“But, my dear Mary, what could induce you to go?”—“Why, they wanted a governess, so I went.”—“But what could induce them to keep you?” The perfect gravity and earnestness with which this question was put set her laughing, and the laugh was echoed back from a group at the end of the room, which I had not before noticed—an elegant man in the prime of life showing a portfolio of rare prints to a fine girl of twelve, and a rosy boy of seven, evidently his children. “Why did they keep me? Ask them,” replied Mary, turning towards them with an arch smile. “We kept her to teach her ourselves,” said the young lady. “We kept her to play cricket with us,” said her brother. “We kept her to marry,” said the gentleman, advancing gaily to shake hands with me. “She was a bad governess, perhaps; but she is an excellent wife—that is her true vocation.” And so it is. She is, indeed, an excellent wife; and assuredly a most fortunate one. I never saw happiness so sparkling or so glowing; never saw such devotion to a bride, or such fondness for a step-mother, as Sir W. S. and his lovely children show to the sweet Cousin Mary.

THE TALKING LADY.

BEN JONSON has a play called *The Silent Woman*, who turns out, as might be expected, to be no woman at all—nothing, as Master Slender said, but “a great lubberly boy;” thereby, as I apprehend, discourteously presuming that a silent woman is a non-entity. If the learned dramatist, thus happily prepared and pre-disposed, had happened to fall in with such a specimen of female loquacity as I have just parted with, he might, perhaps, have given us a pendant to his picture in the *Talking Lady*. Pity but he had! He would have done her justice, which I could not at any time, least of all now: I am too much stunned; too much like one escaped from a belfry on a coronation day. I am just resting from the fatigue of four days’ hard listening;—four snowy, sleety, rainy days—days of every variety of falling weather, all of them too bad to admit the possibility that any petticoated thing, were she as hardy as a Scotch fir, should stir out,—four days chained by “sad civility” to that fire-side, once so quiet, and again—cheering thought!—again I trust to be so, when the echo of that visitor’s incessant tongue shall have died away.

The visitor in question is a very excellent and respectable elderly lady, upright in mind and body, with a figure that does honour to her dancing-master, a face exceedingly well preserved, wrinkled and freckled but still fair, and an air of gentility over her whole person, which is not the least affected by her out-of-fashion garb. She could never be taken for any thing but a woman of family, and perhaps she could as little pass for any other than an old maid. She took us in her way from London to the west of England: and being, as she wrote, “not quite well, not equal to much company, prayed that no other guest might be admitted, so that she might have

the pleasure of our conversation all to herself,"—(*ours!* as if it were possible for any of us to slide in a word edgewise!)—"and especially enjoy the gratification of talking over old times with the master of the house, her countryman." Such was the promise of her letter, and to the letter it has been kept. All the news and scandal of a large county forty years ago, and a hundred years before, and ever since, all the marriages, deaths, births, elopements, law-suits, and casualties of her own times, her father's, grandfather's, great-grandfather's, nephew's, and grand-nephew's, has she detailed with a minuteness, an accuracy, a prodigality of learning, a profuseness of proper names, a pedantry of locality, which would excite the envy of a county historian, a king-at-arms, or even a Scotch novelist. Her knowledge is astonishing; but the most astonishing part of all is how she came by that knowledge. It should seem, to listen to her, as if, at some time of her life, she must have listened herself; and yet her countryman declares, that in the forty years he has known her, no such event has occurred; and she knows new news too! It must be intuition.

The manner of her speech has little remarkable. It is rather old-fashioned and provincial, but perfectly lady-like, low, and gentle, and not seeming so fast as it is; like the great pedestrians, she clears her ground easily, and never seems to use any exertion; yet, "I would my horse had the speed of her tongue, and so good a continuer." She will talk you sixteen hours a day for twenty days together, and not deduct one poor five minutes for halts and baiting time. Talking, sheer talking, is meat and drink and sleep to her. She likes nothing else. Eating is a sad interruption. For the tea-table she has some toleration; but dinner, with its clatter of plates and jingle of knives and forks, dinner is her abhorrence. Nor are the other common pursuits of life more in her favour. Walking exhausts the breath that might be better employed. Dancing is a noisy diversion, and singing is worse; she cannot endure any music, except the long, grand, dull concerto, which

nobody thinks of listening to. Reading and chess she classes together as silent barbarisms, unworthy of a social and civilized people. Cards, too, have their faults ; there is a rivalry, a mute eloquence in those four aces, that leads away the attention ; besides, partners will sometimes scold ; so she never plays at cards ; and upon the strength of this abstinence had very nearly passed for *serious*, till it was discovered that she could not abide a long sermon. She always looks out for the shortest preacher, and never went to above one Bible Meeting in her life.—“ Such speeches ! ” quoth she : “ I thought the men never meant to have done. People have great need of patience.” Plays, of course, she abhors, and operas, and mobs, and all things that will be heard, especially children ; though for babies, particularly when asleep, for dogs and pictures, and such silent intelligences as serve to talk of and to talk to, she has a considerable partiality ; and an agreeable and gracious flattery to the mammas and other owners of these pretty dumb things is a very usual introduction to her miscellaneous harangues. The matter of these orations is inconceivably various. Perhaps the local and genealogical anecdotes, the sort of supplement to the history of *****shire, may be her strongest point ; but she shines almost as much in medicine and housewifery. Her medical dissertations savour a little of that particular branch of the science called quackery. She has a specific against almost every disease to which the human frame is liable ; and is terribly prosy and unmerciful in her symptoms. Her cures kill. In housekeeping, her notions resemble those of other verbal managers ; full of economy and retrenchment, with a leaning towards reform, though she loves so well to declaim on the abuses in the cook’s department, that I am not sure that she would very heartily thank any radical who should sweep them quite away. For the rest, her system sounds very finely in theory, but rather fails in practice. Her recipes would be capital, only that some way or other they do not eat well ; her preserves seldom keep ;

and her sweet wines are sure to turn sour. These are certainly her favourite topics ; but any one will do. Allude to some anecdote of the neighbourhood, and she forthwith treats you with as many parallel passages as are to be found in an air with variations. Take up a new publication, and she is equally at home there ; for though she knows little of books, she has, in the course of an up-and-down life, met with a good many authors, and teases and provokes you by telling of them precisely what you do not care to hear, the maiden names of their wives, and the Christian names of their daughters, and into what families their sisters and cousins married, and in what towns they have lived, what streets, and what numbers: Boswell himself never drew up the table of Dr. Johnson's Fleet-street courts with greater care, than she made out to me the successive residences of P. P. Esq., author of a tract on the French Revolution, and a pamphlet on the Poor Laws. The very weather is not a safe subject. Her memory is a perpetual register of hard frosts, and long droughts, and high winds, and terrible storms, with all the evils that followed in their train, and all the personal events connected with them, so that if you happen to remark that clouds are come up, and you fear it may rain, she replies, " Ay, it is just such a morning as three-and-thirty years ago, when my poor cousin was married—you remember my cousin Barbara—she married so and so, the son of so and so ;" and then comes the whole pedigree of the bridegroom ; the amount of the settlements, and the reading and signing them over-night ; a description of the wedding-dresses, in the style of Sir Charles Grandison, and how much the bride's gown cost per yard ; the names, residences, and a short subsequent history of the bridemaids and men, the gentleman who gave the bride away, and the clergyman who performed the ceremony, with a learned antiquarian digression relative to the church ; then the setting out in procession ; the marriage ; the kissing ; the crying ; the breakfasting ; the drawing the cake through the ring ; and, finally,

the bridal excursion, which brings us back again at an hour's end to the starting post, the weather, and the whole story of the sopping, the drying, the clothes-spoiling, the cold-catching, and all the small evils of a summer shower. By this time it rains, and she sits down to a pathetic see-saw of conjectures on the chance of Mrs. Smith's having set out for her daily walk, or the possibility that Dr. Brown may have ventured to visit his patients in his gig, and the certainty that Lady Green's new housemaid would come from London on the outside of the coach.

With all this intolerable prosing, she is actually reckoned a pleasant woman! Her acquaintance in the great manufacturing town where she usually resides is very large, which may partly account for the misnomer. Her conversation is of a sort to bear dividing. Besides, there is, in all large societies, an instinctive sympathy which directs each individual to the companion most congenial to his humour. Doubtless, her associates deserve the old French compliment, "*Ils ont tous un grand talent pour le silence.*" Parcelled out amongst some seventy or eighty, there may even be some savour in her talk. It is the *tête-à-tête* that kills, or the small fire-side circle of three or four, where only one can speak, and all the rest must seem to listen—*seem!* did I say?—must listen in good earnest. Hotspur's expedient in a similar situation of crying "Hem! Go to," and marking not a word, will not do here; compared to her, Owen Glendower was no conjuror. She has the eye of a hawk, and detects a wandering glance, an incipient yawn, the slightest movement of impatience. The very needle must be quiet. If a pair of scissors do but wag, she is affronted, draws herself up, breaks off in the middle of a story, of a sentence, of a word, and the unlucky culprit must, for civility's sake, summon a more than Spartan fortitude, and beg the torturer to resume her torments—"That, that is the unkindest cut of all!" I wonder, if she had happened to have married, how many husbands she would have talked to death. It is certain that none of her relations are long-lived, after she comes

to reside with them. Father, mother, uncle, sister, brother, two nephews, and one niece, all these have successively passed away, though a healthy race, and with no visible disorder—except—but we must not be uncharitable. They might have died, though she had been born dumb :—"It is an accident that happens every day." Since the decease of her last nephew, she attempted to form an establishment with a widow lady, for the sake, as they both said, of the comfort of society. But—strange miscalculation !—she was a talker too ! They parted in a week.

And we have also parted. I am just returned from escorting her to the coach, which is to convey her two hundred miles westward : and I have still the murmur of her *adieux* resounding in my ears, like the indistinct hum of the air on a frosty night. It was curious to see how, almost simultaneously, these mournful *adieux* shaded into cheerful salutations of her new comrades, the passengers in the mail. Poor souls ! Little does the civil young lad who made way for her, or the fat lady, his mamma, who with pains and inconvenience made room for her, or the grumpy gentleman in the opposite corner, who, after some dispute, was at length won to admit her dressing box—little do they suspect what is to befall them. Two hundred miles ! and she never sleeps in a carriage ! Well, patience be with them, and comfort and peace ! A pleasant journey to them ! And to her all happiness ! She is a most kind and excellent person, one for whom I would do any thing in my poor power—ay, even were it to listen to her another four days.

ELLEN.

A VERY small gift may sometimes cause great pleasure. I have just received a present which has delighted me more than any thing ever bestowed on me by friends or fortune.

It is——But my readers shall guess what it is; and, that they may be enabled to do so, I must tell them a story.

Charlotte and Ellen Page were the twin daughters of the rector of N., a small town in Dorsetshire. They were his only children, having lost their mother shortly after their birth; and, as their father was highly connected, and still more highly accomplished, and possessed good church preferment with a considerable private fortune, they were reared and educated in the most liberal and expensive style. Whilst mere infants they had been uncommonly beautiful, and as remarkably alike as occasionally happens with twin sisters, distinguished only by some ornament of dress. Their very nurse, as she used to boast, could hardly tell her pretty “couplets” apart, so exactly alike were the soft blue eyes, the rosy cheeks, the cherry lips, and the curly light hair. Change the turquoise necklace for the coral, and the nurse herself would not know Charlotte from Ellen. This pretty puzzle, this inconvenience, of which mammas, and aunts, and grand-mammas love to complain, did not last long. Either from a concealed fall, or from original delicacy of habit, the little Ellen faded and drooped almost into deformity. There was no visible defect in her shape, except a slight and almost imperceptible lameness when in quick motion; but there was the marked and peculiar look in the features, the languor and debility, and, above all, the distressing consciousness attendant upon imperfect formation; and, at the age of twenty years, the contrast between the sisters was even more striking than the likeness had been at two.

Charlotte was a fine, robust, noble-looking girl, rather above the middle height; her eyes and complexion sparkled and glowed with life and health, her rosy lips seemed made for smiles, and her glossy brown hair played in natural ringlets round her dimpled face. Her manner was a happy mixture of the playful and the gentle; frank, innocent, and fearless, she relied with a sweet confidence on every body's kindness,

was ready to be pleased, and secure of pleasing. Her artlessness and *naïveté* had great success in society, especially as they were united with the most perfect good-breeding, and considerable quickness and talent. Her musical powers were of the most delightful kind; she sang exquisitely, joining to great taste and science, a life, and freedom, and buoyancy, quite unusual in that artificial personage, a young lady. Her clear and ringing notes had the effect of a milk-maid's song, as if a mere ebullition of animal spirits; there was no resisting the contagion of Charlotte's glee. She was a general favourite, and, above all, a favourite at home,—the apple of her father's eye, the pride and ornament of his house, and the delight and comfort of his life. The two children had been so much alike, and born so nearly together, that the precedence in age had never been definitively settled; but that point seemed very early to decide itself. Unintentionally, as it were, Charlotte took the lead, gave invitations, received visitors, sat at the head of the table, became in fact and in name Miss Page, while her sister continued Miss Ellen.

Poor Ellen! she was short, and thin, and sickly, and pale, with no personal charm but the tender expression of her blue eyes, and the timid sweetness of her countenance. The resemblance to her sister had vanished altogether, except when very rarely some strong emotion of pleasure, a word of praise, or a look of kindness from her father, would bring a smile and a blush at once into her face, and lighten it up like a sunbeam. Then, for a passing moment, she was like Charlotte, and even prettier,—there was so much of mind, of soul, in the transitory beauty. In manner she was unchangeably gentle and distressingly shy, shy even to awkwardness. Shame and fear clung to her like her shadow. In company she could neither sing, nor play, nor speak, without trembling, especially when her father was present. Her awe of him was inexpressible. Mr. Page was a man of considerable talent and acquirement, of polished and elegant manners, and great con-

versational power,—quick, ready, and sarcastic. He never condescended to scold; but there was something very formidable in the keen glance, and the cutting jest, to which poor Ellen's want of presence of mind frequently exposed her,—something from which she shrank into the very earth. He was a good man too, and a kind father—at least he meant to be so,—attentive to her health and comfort, strictly impartial in favours and presents, in pocket-money and amusements, making no difference between the twins, except that which he could not help, the difference in his love. But, to an apprehensive temper and an affectionate heart, that was every thing; and, whilst Charlotte flourished and blossomed like a rose in the sunshine, Ellen sickened and withered like the same plant in the shade.

Mr. Page lost much enjoyment by this unfortunate partiality; for he had taste enough to have particularly valued the high endowments which formed the delight of the few friends to whom his daughter was intimately known. To them not only her varied and accurate acquirements, but her singular richness of mind, her grace and propriety of expression and fertility of idea, joined to the most perfect ignorance of her own superiority, rendered her an object of as much admiration as interest. In poetry, especially, her justness of taste and quickness of feeling were almost unrivalled. She was no poetess herself, never, I believe, even ventured to compose a sonnet; and her enjoyment of high literature was certainly the keener for that wise abstinence from a vain competition. Her admiration was really worth having. The tears would come into her eyes, the book would fall from her hand, and she would sit lost in ecstasy over some noble passage, till praise, worthy of the theme, would burst in unconscious eloquence from her lips.

But the real charm of Ellen Page lay in the softness of her heart and the generosity of her character: no human being was ever so free from selfishness, in all its varied and clinging

forms. She literally forgot herself in her pure and ardent sympathy with all whom she loved, or all to whom she could be useful. There were no limits to her indulgence, no bounds to her candour. Shy and timid as she was, she forgot her fears to plead for the innocent, or the penitent, or even the guilty. She was the excuser-general of the neighbourhood, turned every speech and action the sunny side without, and often in her good-natured acuteness hit on the real principle of action, when the cunning and the worldly-wise and the cynical, and such as look only for bad motives, had failed. She had, too, that rare quality, a genuine sympathy not only with the sorrowful, (there is a pride in that feeling, a superiority,—we have all plenty of that,) but with the happy. She could smile with those who smiled, as well as weep with those who wept, and rejoice in a success to which she had not contributed, protected from every touch of envy, no less by her noble spirit than by her pure humility: she never thought of herself.

So constituted, it may be imagined that she was, to all who really knew her, an object of intense admiration and love. Servants, children, poor people, all adored Miss Ellen. She had other friends in her own rank of life, who had found her out—many; but her chief friend, her principal admirer, she who loved her with the most entire affection, and looked up to her with the most devoted respect, was her sister. Never was the strong and lovely tie of twin-sisterhood more closely knit than in these two charming young women. Ellen looked on her favoured sister with a pure and unjealous delight that made its own happiness, a spirit of candour and of justice that never permitted her to cast a shade of blame on the sweet object of her father's partiality: she never indeed blamed him; it seemed to her so natural that every one should prefer her sister. Charlotte, on the other hand, used all her influence for Ellen, protected and defended her, and was half tempted to murmur at an affection which she would have

valued more, if shared equally with that dear friend. Thus they lived in peace and harmony; Charlotte's bolder temper and higher spirits leading and guiding in all common points, whilst on the more important she implicitly yielded to Ellen's judgment. But, when they had reached their twenty-first year, a great evil threatened one of the sisters, arising (strange to say) from the other's happiness. Charlotte, the reigning *belle* of an extensive and affluent neighbourhood, had had almost as many suitors as Penelope; but, light-hearted, happy at home, constantly busy and gay, she had taken no thought of love, and always struck me as a very likely subject for an old maid: yet her time came at last. A young man the very reverse of herself, pale, thoughtful, gentlemanlike, and melancholy, wooed and won our fair Euphrosyne. He was the second son of a noble house, and bred to the church; and it was agreed between the fathers, that, as soon as he should be ordained, (for he still wanted some months of the necessary age,) and settled in a family living held for him by a friend, the young couple should be married.

In the mean while Mr. Page, who had recently succeeded to some property in Ireland, found it necessary to go thither for a short time; and, unwilling to take his daughters with him, as his estate lay in the disturbed districts, he indulged us with their company during his absence. They came to us in the bursting spring-time, on the very same day with the nightingale; the country was new to them, and they were delighted with the scenery and with our cottage life. We, on our part, were enchanted with our young guests. Charlotte was certainly the most amiable of enamoured damsels, for love with her was but a more sparkling and smiling form of happiness;—all that there was of care and fear in this attachment fell to Ellen's lot; but even she, though sighing at the thought of parting, could not be very miserable whilst her sister was so happy.

A few days after their arrival, we happened to dine with

our accomplished neighbours, Colonel Falkner and his sister. Our young friends of course accompanied us ; and a similarity of age, of liveliness, and of musical talent, speedily recommended Charlotte and Miss Falkner to each other. They became immediately intimate, and were soon almost inseparable. Ellen at first hung back. "The house was too gay, too full of shifting company, of titles, and of strange faces. Miss Falkner was very kind ; but she took too much notice of her, introduced her to lords and ladies, talked of her drawings, and pressed her to sing :—she would rather, if I pleased, stay with me, and walk in the coppice, or sit in the arbour, and one might read Spenser whilst the other worked—that would be best of all. Might she stay?"—"Oh surely ! But Colonel Falkner, Ellen, I thought you would have liked him?"—"Yes !"—"That *yes* sounds exceedingly like *no*."—"Why, is he not almost too clever, too elegant, too grand a man ? Too mannered, as it were ? Too much like what one fancies of a prince—of George the Fourth, for instance—too high and too condescending ? These are strange faults," continued she, laughing—"and it is a curious injustice that I should dislike a man merely because he is so graceful, that he makes me feel doubly awkward—so tall, that I am in his presence a conscious dwarf—so alive and eloquent in conversation, that I feel more than ever puzzled and unready. But so it is. To say the truth, I am more afraid of him than of any human being in the world, except one. I may stay with you—may I not ; and read of Una and of Britomart—that prettiest scene where her old nurse soothes her to sleep ? I may stay ?" And for two or three mornings she did stay with me ; but Charlotte's influence and Miss Falkner's kindness speedily drew her to Holly-grove, at first shyly and reluctantly, yet soon with an evident though quiet enjoyment ; and we, sure that our young visitors could gain nothing but good in such society, were pleased that they should so vary the humble home-scene.

Colonel Falkner was a man in the very prime of life, of

that happy age which unites the grace and spirit of youth with the firmness and vigour of manhood. The heir of a large fortune, he had served in the peninsular war, fought in Spain and France, and at Waterloo, and, quitting the army at the peace, had loitered about Germany, and Italy, and Greece, and only returned on the death of his father, two or three years back, to reside on the family estate, where he had won "golden opinions from all sorts of people." He was, as Ellen truly described him, tall and graceful, and well-bred almost to a fault; reminding her of that *beau-ideal* of courtly elegance, George the Fourth, and me, (pray, reader, do not tell!) me, a little, a very little, the least in the world, of Sir Charles Grandison. He certainly did excel rather too much in the mere forms of politeness, in clokings and bowings, and handings down stairs; but then he was, like both his prototypes, thoroughly imbued with its finer essence—considerate, attentive, kind, in the most comprehensive sense of that comprehensive word. I have certainly known men of deeper learning, and more original genius, but never any one whose powers were better adapted to conversation, who could blend more happily the most varied and extensive knowledge with the most playful wit and the most interesting and amiable character. *Fascinating* was the word that seemed made for him. His conversation was entirely free from trickery and display—the charm was (or seemed to be) perfectly natural: he was an excellent listener; and when he was speaking to any eminent person—orator, artist, or poet,—I have sometimes seen a slight hesitation, a momentary diffidence, as attractive as it was unexpected. It was this astonishing evidence of fellow-feeling, joined to the gentleness of his tone, the sweetness of his smile, and his studied avoidance of all particular notice or attention, that first reconciled Ellen to Colonel Falkner. His sister, too, a charming young woman, as like him as Viola to Sebastian, began to understand the sensitive properties of this shrinking and delicate flower,

which, left to itself, repaid their kind neglect by unfolding in a manner that surprised and delighted us all. Before the spring had glided into summer, Ellen was as much at home at Holly-grove as with us; talked and laughed and played and sang as freely as Charlotte. She would indeed break off if visibly listened to, either when speaking or singing; but still the ice was broken; that rich, low, mellow voice, unrivalled in pathos and sweetness, might be heard every evening, even by the Colonel, with little more precaution, not to disturb her by praise or notice, than would be used with her fellow-warbler, the nightingale.

She was happy at Holly-grove, and we were delighted; but so shifting and various are human feelings and wishes, that, as the summer wore on, before the hay-making was over in its beautiful park, whilst the bees were still in its lime-trees, and the golden beetle lurked in its white rose, I began to lament that she had ever seen Holly-grove, or known its master. It was clear to me, that unintentionally on his part, unwittingly on hers, her heart was gone,—and, considering the merit of the unconscious possessor, probably gone for ever. She had all the pretty marks of love at that happy moment when the name and nature of the passion are alike unsuspected by the victim. To her there was but one object in the whole world, and that one was Colonel Falkner; she lived only in his presence; hung on his words; was restless she knew not why in his absence; adopted his tastes and opinions, which differed from hers as those of clever men so frequently do from those of clever women; read the books he praised, and praised them too, deserting our old idols, Spenser and Fletcher, for his favourites, Dryden and Pope; sang the songs he loved, as she walked about the house; drew his features instead of Milton's in a portrait which she was copying for me of our great poet,—and finally wrote his name on the margin. She moved as in a dream—a dream as innocent as it was delicious!—but oh the sad, sad waking! It made my

heart ache to think of the misery to which that fine and sensitive mind seemed to be reserved. Ellen was formed for constancy and suffering—it was her first love, and it would be her last. I had no hope that her affection was returned. Young men, talk as they may of mental attractions, are commonly the slaves of personal charms. Colonel Falkner, especially, was a professed admirer of beauty. I had even sometimes fancied that he was caught by Charlotte's, and had therefore taken an opportunity to communicate her engagements to his sister. Certainly he paid our fair and blooming guest extraordinary attention; any thing of gallantry or compliment was always addressed to her, and so for the most part was his gay and captivating conversation; whilst his manner to Ellen, though exquisitely soft and kind, seemed rather that of an affectionate brother. I had no hopes.

Affairs were in this posture when I was at once grieved and relieved by the unexpected recall of our young visitors. Their father had completed his business in Ireland, and was eager to return to his dear home, and his dear children; Charlotte's lover, too, was ordained, and was impatient to possess his promised treasure. The intended bridegroom was to arrive the same evening to escort the fair sisters, and the journey was to take place the next day. Imagine the revulsion of feeling produced by a short note, a bit of folded paper—the natural and redoubled ecstasy of Charlotte, the mingled emotions of Ellen. She wept bitterly: at first she called it joy—joy that she should again see her dear father; then it was grief to lose her Charlotte; grief to part from me; but, when she threw herself in a farewell embrace on the neck of Miss Falkner, whose brother happened to be absent for a few days on business, the truth appeared to burst upon her at once, in a gush of agony that seemed likely to break her heart. Miss Falkner was deeply affected; begged her to write to her often, very often; loaded her with the gifts of little price, the valueless tokens which affection holds so dear, and stole one of her fair ringlets in return. "This is the

number of gentlemen and players, as they are called—people who make a trade of that noble sport, and degrade it into an affair of bettings, and hedgings, and cheatings, it may be, like boxing or horse-racing; nor do I mean a pretty fête in a gentleman's park, where one club of cricketing dandies encounter another such club, and where they show off in graceful costume to a gay marquee of admiring belles, who condescend so to purchase admiration, and while away a long summer morning in partaking cold collations, conversing occasionally, and seeming to understand the game;—the whole being conducted according to ball-room etiquette, so as to be exceedingly elegant and exceedingly dull. No! the cricket that I mean is a real solid old-fashioned match between neighbouring parishes, where each attacks the other for honour and a supper, glory and half-a-crown a man. If there be any gentlemen amongst them, it is well—if not, it is so much the better. Your gentleman cricketer is in general rather an anomalous character. Elderly gentlemen are obviously good for nothing; and young beaux are, for the most part, hampered and trammelled by dress and habit; the stiff cravat, the pinched-in waist, the dandy-walk—oh, they will never do for cricket! Now, our country lads, accustomed to the flail or the hammer, (your blacksmiths are capital hitters,) have the free use of their arms; they know how to move their shoulders; and they can move their feet too—they can run; then they are so much better made, so much more athletic, and yet so much lissomer—to use a Hampshire phrase, which deserves at least to be good English. Here and there, indeed, one meets with an old Etonian, who retains his boyish love for that game which formed so considerable a branch of his education: some even preserve their boyish proficiency, but in general it wears away like the Greek, quite as certainly, and almost as fast; a few years of Oxford, or Cambridge, or the continent, are sufficient to annihilate both the power and the inclination. No! a village match is the thing,—where our highest officer

—our conductor (to borrow a musical term) is but a little farmer's second son ; where a day-labourer is our bowler, and a blacksmith our long-stop ; where the spectators consist of the retired cricketers, the veterans of the green, the careful mothers, the girls, and all the boys of two parishes, together with a few amateurs, little above them in rank, and not at all in pretension ; where laughing and shouting, and the very ecstasy of merriment and good humour, prevail : such a match, in short, 'as I attended yesterday, at the expense of getting twice wet through, and as I would attend to-morrow, at the certainty of having that ducking doubled.

For the last three weeks our village has been in a state of great excitement, occasioned by a challenge from our north-western neighbours, the men of B., to contend with us at cricket. Now we have not been much in the habit of playing matches. Three or four years ago, indeed, we encountered the men of S., our neighbours south-by-east, with a sort of doubtful success, beating them on our own ground, whilst they in the second match returned the compliment on theirs. This discouraged us. Then an unnatural coalition between a high-church curate and an evangelical gentleman-farmer drove our lads from the Sunday-evening practice, which, as it did not begin before both services were concluded, and as it tended to keep the young men from the ale-house, our magistrates had winked at, if not encouraged. The sport therefore had languished until the present season, when under another change of circumstances the spirit began to revive. Half a dozen fine active lads, of influence amongst their comrades, grew into men and yearned for cricket ; an enterprising publican gave a set of ribands : his rival, mine host of the Rose, an out-doer by profession, gave two ; and the clergyman and his lay ally, both well-disposed and good-natured men, gratified by the submission to their authority, and finding, perhaps, that no great good resulted from the substitution of public-houses for out-of-door diversions, relaxed. In short the

practice recommenced, and the hill was again alive with men and boys, and innocent merriment; but farther than the riband matches amongst ourselves nobody dreamed of going, till this challenge—we were modest, and doubted our own strength. The B. people, on the other hand, must have been braggers born, a whole parish of gasconaders. Never was such boasting! such crowing! such ostentatious display of practice! such mutual compliments from man to man—bowler to batter, batter to bowler! It was a wonder they did not challenge all England. It must be confessed that we were a little astounded; yet we firmly resolved not to decline the combat; and one of the most spirited of the new growth, William Grey by name, took up the glove in a style of manly courtesy, that would have done honour to a knight in the days of chivalry.—“We were not professed players,” he said; “being little better than school-boys, and scarcely older; but, since they had done us the honour to challenge us, we would try our strength. It would be no discredit to be beaten by such a field.”

Having accepted the wager of battle, our champion began forthwith to collect his forces. William Grey is himself one of the finest youths that one shall see,—tall, active, slender and yet strong, with a piercing eye full of sagacity, and a smile full of good humour,—a farmer’s son by station, and used to hard work as farmers’ sons are now, liked by every body, and admitted to be an excellent cricketer. He immediately set forth to muster his men, remembering with great complacency that Samuel Long, a bowler *comme il y en a peu*, the very man who had knocked down nine wickets, had beaten us, bowled us out at the fatal return match some years ago at S., had luckily, in a remove of a quarter of a mile last Lady-day, crossed the boundaries of his old parish, and actually belonged to us. Here was a stroke of good fortune! Our captain applied to him instantly; and he agreed at a word. Indeed Samuel Long is a very civilized person. He

is a middle-aged man, who looks rather old amongst our young lads, and whose thickness and breadth give no token of remarkable activity; but he is very active, and so steady a player! so safe! We had half gained the match when we had secured him. He is a man of substance, too, in every way; owns one cow, two donkeys, six pigs, and geese and ducks beyond count;—dresses like a farmer, and owes no man a shilling;—and all this from pure industry, sheer day-labour. Note that your good cricketer is commonly the most industrious man in the parish; the habits that make him such are precisely those which make a good workman—steadiness, sobriety, and activity—Samuel Long might pass for the beau ideal of the two characters. Happy were we to possess him! Then we had another piece of good luck. James Brown, a journeyman blacksmith and a native, who, being of a rambling disposition, had roamed from place to place for half a dozen years, had just returned to settle with his brother at another corner of our village, bringing with him a prodigious reputation in cricket and in gallantry—the gay Lothario of the neighbourhood. He is said to have made more conquests in love and in cricket than any blacksmith in the county. To him also went the indefatigable William Grey, and he also consented to play. No end to our good fortune! Another celebrated batter, called Joseph Hearne, had likewise recently married into the parish. He worked, it is true, at the A. mills, but slept at the house of his wife's father in our territories. He also was sought and found by our leader. But he was grand and shy; made an immense favour of the thing; courted courting and then hung back;—"Did not know that he could be spared; had partly resolved not to play again—at least not this season; thought it rash to accept the challenge; thought they might do without him—"—"Truly I think so too," said our spirited champion; "we will not trouble you, Mr. Hearne."

Having thus secured two powerful auxiliaries, and rejected a third, we began to reckon and select the regular native

forces. Thus ran our list:—William Grey, 1.—Samuel Long, 2.—James Brown, 3.—George and John Simmons, one capital, the other so so,—an uncertain hitter, but a good fieldman, 5.—Joel Brent, excellent, 6.—Ben Appleton—Here was a little pause—Ben's abilities at cricket were not completely ascertained; but then he was so good a fellow, so full of fun and waggy! no doing without Ben. So he figured in the list, 7.—George Harris—a short halt there too! Slowish—slow but sure. I think the proverb brought him in, 8.—Tom Coper—oh, beyond the world, Tom Coper! the red-headed gardening lad, whose left-handed strokes send *her*, (a cricket-ball, like that other moving thing a ship, is always of the feminine gender,) send her spinning a mile, 9.—Harry Willis, another blacksmith, 10.

We had now ten of our eleven, but the choice of the last occasioned some demur. Three young Martins, rich farmers of the neighbourhood, successively presented themselves, and were all rejected by our independent and impartial general for want of merit—*cricketal* merit. “Not good enough,” was his pithy answer. Then our worthy neighbour, the half-pay lieutenant, offered his services—he, too, though with some hesitation and modesty, was refused—“Not quite young enough” was his sentence. John Strong, the exceeding long son of our dwarfish mason, was the next candidate,—a nice youth—every body likes John Strong,—and a willing, but so tall and so limp, bent in the middle—a thread-paper, six feet high! We were all afraid that, in spite of his name, his strength would never hold out. “Wait till next year, John,” quoth William Grey, with all the dignified seniority of twenty speaking to eighteen. “Coper's a year younger,” said John. “Coper's a foot shorter,” replied William: so John retired; and the eleventh man remained unchosen, almost to the eleventh hour. The eve of the match arrived, and the post was still vacant, when a little boy of fifteen, David Willis, brother to Harry, admitted by accident to the last practice, saw eight of them out, and was voted in by acclamation.

That Sunday evening's practice (for Monday was the important day) was a period of great anxiety, and, to say the truth, of great pleasure. There is something strangely delightful in the innocent spirit of party. To be one of a numerous body, to be authorized to say *we*, to have a rightful interest in triumph or defeat, is gratifying at once to social feeling and to personal pride. There was not a ten-year old urchin, or a septuagenary woman in the parish, who did not feel an additional importance, a reflected consequence, in speaking of "our side." An election interests in the same way; but that feeling is less pure. Money is there, and hatred, and politics, and lies. Oh, to be a voter, or a voter's wife, comes nothing near the genuine and hearty sympathy of belonging to a parish, breathing the same air, looking on the same trees, listening to the same nightingales! Talk of a patriotic elector!—Give me a parochial patriot, a man who loves his parish! Even *we*, the female partisans, may partake the common ardour. I am sure I did. I never, though tolerably eager and enthusiastic at all times, remember being in a more delicious state of excitation than on the eve of that battle. Our hopes waxed stronger and stronger. Those of our players who were present, were excellent. William Grey got forty notches off his own bat; and that brilliant hitter, Tom Coper, gained eight from two successive balls. As the evening advanced, too, we had encouragement of another sort. A spy, who had been despatched to reconnoitre the enemy's quarters, returned from their practising ground, with a most consolatory report. "Really," said Charles Grover, our intelligence—a fine old steady judge, one who had played well in his day—"they are no better than so many old women. Any five of ours would beat their eleven." This sent us to bed in high spirits.

Morning dawned less favourably. The sky promised a series of deluging showers, and kept its word as English skies are wont to do on such occasions; and a lamentable message

arrived at the head-quarters from our trusty comrade Joel Brent. His master, a great farmer, had begun the hay-harvest that very morning, and Joel, being as eminent in one field as in another, could not be spared. Imagine Joel's plight! the most ardent of all our eleven! a knight held back from the tourney! a soldier from the battle! The poor swain was inconsolable. At last, one who is always ready to do a good-natured action, great or little, set forth to back his petition; and, by dint of appealing to the public spirit of our worthy neighbour and the state of the barometer, talking alternately of the parish honour and thunder showers, of lost matches and sopped hay, he carried his point, and returned triumphantly with the delighted Joel.

In the mean time we became sensible of another defalcation. On calling over our roll, Brown was missing; and the spy of the preceding night, Charles Grover,—the universal scout and messenger of the village, a man who will run half-a-dozen miles for a pint of beer, who does errands for the very love of the trade, who, if he had been a lord, would have been an ambassador—was instantly despatched to summon the truant. His report spread general consternation. Brown had set off at four o'clock in the morning to play in a cricket-match at M., a little town twelve miles off, which had been his last residence. Here was desertion! Here was treachery! Here was treachery against that goodly state, our parish! To send James Brown to Coventry was the immediate resolution; but even that seemed too light a punishment for such delinquency. Then how we cried him down! At ten on Sunday night (for the rascal had actually practised with us, and never said a word of his intended disloyalty) he was our faithful mate, and the best player (take him for all in all) of the eleven. At ten in the morning he had run away, and we were well rid of him; he was no batter compared with William Grey or Tom Coper; not fit to wipe the shoes of Samuel Long, as a bowler; nothing of a scout to John Simmons; the boy David Willis was worth fifty of him—

"I trust we have within our realm
Five hundred good as he,"

was the universal sentiment. So we took tall John Strong, who, with an incurable hankering after the honour of being admitted, had kept constantly with the players, to take the chance of some such accident—we took John for our *pis-aller*. I never saw any one prouder than the good-humoured lad was of this not very flattering piece of preferment.

John Strong was elected, and Brown sent to Coventry; and, when I first heard of his delinquency, I thought the punishment only too mild for the crime. But I have since learned the secret history of the offence; (if we could know the secret histories of all offences, how much better the world would seem than it does now!) and really my wrath is much abated. It was a piece of gallantry, of devotion to the sex, or rather a chivalrous obedience to one chosen fair. I must tell my readers the story. Mary Allen, the prettiest girl of M., had it seems revenged upon our blacksmith the numberless inconsistencies of which he stood accused. He was in love over head and ears, but the nymph was cruel. She said no, and no, and no, and poor Brown, three times rejected, at last resolved to leave the place, partly in despair, and partly in that hope which often mingles strangely with a lover's despair, the hope that when he was gone he should be missed. He came home to his brother's accordingly; but for five weeks he heard nothing from or of the inexorable Mary, and was glad to beguile his own "vexing thoughts," by endeavouring to create in his mind an artificial and factitious interest in our cricket-match—all unimportant as such a trifle must have seemed to a man in love. Poor James, however, is a social and warm-hearted person, not likely to resist a contagious sympathy. As the time for the play advanced, the interest which he had at first affected became genuine and sincere: and he was really, when he left the ground on Sunday night, almost as enthusiastically absorbed in the event of the next day as Joel Brent

himself. He little foresaw the new and delightful interest which awaited him at home, where, on the moment of his arrival, his sister-in-law and confidante presented him with a billet from the lady of his heart. It had, with the usual delay of letters sent by private hands in that rank of life, loitered on the road, in a degree inconceivable to those who are accustomed to the punctual speed of the post, and had taken ten days for its twelve miles' journey. Have my readers any wish to see this *billet-doux*? I can show them (but in strict confidence) a literal copy. It was addressed,

“ For mistur jem browne
 “ blaxmith by
 “ S.”

The inside ran thus :—“ Mistur browne this is to Inform yew that oure parish plays bramley men next monday is a week, i think we shall lose without yew. from your humbell servant to command

“ MARY ALLEN.”

Was there ever a prettier relenting? a summons more flattering, more delicate, more irresistible? The precious epistle was undated; but, having ascertained who brought it, and found, by cross-examining the messenger, that the Monday in question was the very next day, we were not surprised to find that *Mistur browne* forgot his engagement to us, forgot all but Mary and Mary's letter, and set off at four o'clock the next morning to walk twelve miles, and play for her parish, and in her sight. Really we must not send James Brown to Coventry—must we? Though if, as his sister-in-law tells our damsel Harriet he hopes to do, he should bring the fair Mary home as his bride, he will not greatly care how little we say to him. But he must not be sent to Coventry—True-love forbid!

At last we were all assembled, and marched down to H. common, the appointed ground, which, though in our dominions according to the map, was the constant practising place of our

opponents, and *terra incognita* to us. We found our adversaries on the ground as we expected, for our various delays had hindered us from taking the field so early as we wished; and, as soon as we had settled all preliminaries, the match began.

But, alas! I have been so long settling my preliminaries, that I have left myself no room for the detail of our victory, and must squeeze the account of our grand achievements into as little compass as Cowley, when he crammed the names of eleven of his mistresses into the narrow space of four eight-syllable lines. *They* began the warfare—these boastful men of B. And what think you, gentle reader, was the amount of their innings? These challengers—the famous eleven—how many did they get? Think! imagine! guess!—You cannot?—Well!—they got twenty-two, or, rather, they got twenty; for two of theirs were short notches, and would never have been allowed, only that, seeing what they were made of, we and our umpires were not particular.—They should have had twenty more, if they had chosen to claim them. Oh, how well we fielded! and how well we bowled! our good play had quite as much to do with their miserable failure as their bad. Samuel Long is a slow bowler, George Simmons a fast one, and the change from Long's lobbing to Simmons's fast balls posed them completely. Poor simpletons! they were always wrong, expecting the slow for the quick, and the quick for the slow. Well, we went in. And what were our innings? Guess again!—guess! A hundred and sixty-nine! in spite of soaking showers, and wretched ground, where the ball would not run a yard, we headed them by a hundred and forty-seven; and then they gave in, as well they might. William Grey pressed them much to try another innings. "There was so much chance," as he courteously observed, "in cricket, that advantageous as our position seemed, we might, very possibly, be overtaken. The B. men had better try." But they were beaten sulky, and would not move—to my great disappoint-

ment ; I wanted to prolong the pleasure of success. What a glorious sensation it is to be for five hours together winning—winning—winning ! always feeling what a whist-player feels when he takes up four honours, seven trumps ! Who would think that a little bit of leather, and two pieces of wood, had such a delightful and delighting power ?

The only drawback on my enjoyment, was the failure of the pretty boy, David Willis, who injudiciously put in first, and playing for the first time in a match amongst men and strangers, who talked to him, and stared at him, was seized with such a fit of shamefaced shyness, that he could scarcely hold his bat, and was bowled out without a stroke, from actual nervousness. "He will come off that," Tom Coper says.—I am afraid he will. I wonder whether Tom had ever any modesty to lose. Our other modest lad, John Strong, did very well ; his length told in fielding, and he got good fame. Joel Brent, the rescued mower, got into a scrape, and out of it again ; his fortune for the day. He ran out his mate, Samuel Long ; who, I do believe, but for the excess of Joel's eagerness, would have staid in till this time, by which exploit he got into sad disgrace ; and then he himself got thirty-seven runs, which redeemed his reputation. William Grey made a hit which actually lost the cricket-ball. We think she lodged in a hedge, a quarter of a mile off, but nobody could find her. And George Simmons had nearly lost his shoe, which he tossed away in a passion, for having been caught out, owing to the ball glancing against it. These, together with a very complete somerset of Ben Appleton, our long-stop, who floundered about in the mud, making faces and attitudes as laughable as Grimaldi, none could tell whether by accident or design, were the chief incidents of the scene of action. Amongst the spectators nothing remarkable occurred, beyond the general calamity of two or three drenchings, except that a form, placed by the side of a hedge, under a very insufficient shelter, was knocked into the ditch, in a sudden rush of the cricketers to

escape a pelting shower, by which means all parties shared the fate of Ben Appleton, some on land and some by water ; and that, amidst the scramble, a saucy gipsy of a girl contrived to steal from the knee of the demure and well-apparelled Samuel Long, a smart handkerchief, which his careful dame had tied around it, to preserve his new (what is the mincing feminine word ?)—his new—inexpressibles ; thus reversing the story of Desdemona, and causing the new Othello to call aloud for his handkerchief, to the great diversion of the company. And so we parted ; the players retired to their supper, and we to our homes ; all wet through, all good-humoured, and all happy—except the losers.

To-day we are happy too. Hats, with ribands in them, go glancing up and down ; and William Grey says, with a proud humility, “ We do not challenge any parish ; but if we be challenged, we are ready.”

TOM CORDERY.



THERE are certain things and persons that look as if they could never die : things of such vigour and hardiness, that

they seem constituted for an interminable duration, a sort of immortality. An old pollard-oak of my acquaintance used to give me this impression. Never was tree so gnarled, so knotted, so full of crooked life. Garlanded with ivy and woodbine, almost bending under the weight of its own rich leaves and acorns, tough, vigorous, lusty, concentrating as it were the very spirit of vitality into its own curtailed proportions,—could that tree ever die? I have asked myself twenty times, as I stood looking on the deep water over which it hung, and in which it seemed to live again—would that strong dwarf ever fall? Alas! the question is answered. Walking by the spot to-day—this very day—there it lay prostrate; the ivy still clinging about it, the twigs swelling with sap, and putting forth already the early buds. There it lay, a victim to the taste and skill of some admirer of British woods, who, with the tact of Ugo Foscolo (that prince of amateurs) has discovered in the knots and gnarls of the exterior coat the leopard-like beauty which is concealed within the trunk. There it lies, a type of sylvan instability, fallen like an emperor. Another piece of strong nature in a human form used to convey to me exactly the same feeling—and he is gone too! Tom Cordery is dead. The bell is tolling for him at this very moment. Tom Cordery dead! the words seem almost a contradiction. One is tempted to send for the sexton and the undertaker, to undig the grave, to force open the coffin-lid—there must be some mistake. But, alas! it is too true; the typhus fever, that axe which levels the strong as the weak, has hewed him down at a blow. Poor Tom Cordery!

This human oak grew on the wild North-of-Hampshire country, of which I have before made honourable mention; a country of heath, and hill, and forest, partly reclaimed, enclosed, and planted by some of the greater proprietors, but for the most part uncultivated and uncivilized; a proper refuge for wild animals of every species. Of these the most notable was my friend Tom Cordery, who presented in his

own person no unfit emblem of the district in which he lived—the gentlest of savages, the wildest of civilized men. He was by calling rat-catcher, hare-finder, and broom-maker; a triad of trades which he had substituted for the one grand profession of poaching, which he followed in his younger days with unrivalled talent and success, and would, undoubtedly, have pursued till his death, had not the bursting of an overloaded gun unluckily shot off his left hand. As it was, he still contrived to mingle a little of his old occupation with his honest callings; was a reference of high authority amongst the young aspirants, an adviser of undoubted honour and secrecy—suspected, and more than suspected, as being one “who, though he played no more, o’erlooked the cards.” Yet he kept to windward of the law, and indeed contrived to be on such terms of social and even friendly intercourse with the guardians of the game on M. common, as may be said to prevail between reputed thieves and the myrmidons of justice in the neighbourhood of Bow-street. Indeed, his especial crony, the head keeper, used sometimes to hint, when Tom, elevated by ale, had provoked him by overcrowing, “that a stump was no bad shield, and that to shoot off a hand and a bit of an arm for a blind, would be nothing to so daring a chap as Tom Cordery.” This conjecture, never broached till the keeper was warm with wrath and liquor, and Tom fairly out of hearing, seemed always to me a little super-subtle; but it is certain that Tom’s new professions did bear rather a suspicious analogy to the old, and the ferrets, and terriers, and mongrels by whom he was surrounded, “did really look,” as the worthy keeper observed, “fitter to find Christian hares and pheasants, than rats and such vermin.” So in good truth did Tom himself. Never did any human being look more like that sort of sportsman commonly called a poacher. He was a tall, finely-built man, with a prodigious stride, that cleared the ground like a horse, and a power of continuing his slow and steady speed, that seemed nothing less than miraculous. Neither

man, nor horse, nor dog, could out-tire him. He had a bold, undaunted presence, and an evident strength and power of bone and muscle. You might see by looking at him, that he did not know what fear meant. In his youth he had fought more battles than any man in the forest. He was as if born without nerves, totally insensible to the recoils and disgusts of humanity. I have known him take up a huge adder, cut off its head, and then deposit the living and writhing body in his brimless hat, and walk with it coiling and wreathing about his head, like another Medusa, till the sport of the day was over, and he carried it home to secure the fat. With all this iron stubbornness of nature, he was of a most mild and gentle demeanour, had a fine placidity of countenance, and a quick blue eye beaming with good-humour. His face was sunburnt into one general pale vermilion hue that overspread all his features; his very hair was sunburnt too. His costume was generally a smock-frock of no doubtful complexion, dirt-coloured, which hung round him in tatters like fringe, rather augmenting than diminishing the freedom, and, if I may so say, the gallantry of his bearing. This frock was furnished with a huge inside pocket, in which to deposit the game killed by his patrons—for of his three employments, that which consisted of finding hares for the great farmers and small gentry, who were wont to course on the common, was by far the most profitable and most pleasing to him, and to them. Every body liked Tom Cordery. He had himself an aptness to like, which is certain to be repaid in kind—the very dogs knew him, and loved him, and would beat for him almost as soon as for their master. Even May, the most sagacious of greyhounds, appreciated his talents, and would as soon listen to Tom sohoing as to old Tray giving tongue.

Nor was his conversation less agreeable to the other part of the company. Servants and masters were equally desirous to secure Tom. Besides his general and professional familiarity with beasts and birds, their ways and doings, a know-

ledge so minute and accurate, that it might have put to shame many a professed naturalist, he had no small acquaintance with the goings-on of that unfeathered biped called man ; in short, he was, next after Lucy, who recognised his rivalry by hating, decrying, and undervaluing him, by far the best news-gatherer of the country side. His news he of course picked up on the civilized side of the parish, (there is no gossiping in the forest,) partly at that well-frequented inn the Red Lion, of which Tom was a regular and noted supporter—partly amongst his several employers, and partly by his own sagacity. In the matter of marriages, (pairings he was wont to call them,) he relied chiefly on his own skill in noting certain preliminary indications ; and certainly for a guesser by profession, and a very bold one, he was astonishingly often right. At the alehouse especially, he was of the first authority. An air of mild importance, a diplomatic reserve on some points, great smoothness of speech, and that gentleness which is so often the result of conscious power, made him there an absolute ruler. Perhaps the effect of these causes might be a little aided by the latent dread which that power inspired in others. Many an exploit had proved that Tom Cordery's one arm was fairly worth any two on the common. The pommeling of Bob Arlott, and the levelling of Jem Serle to the earth by one swing of a huge old hare, (which unusual weapon was by the way the first-slain of Mayflower, on its way home to us in that walking cupboard, his pocket, when the unlucky rencontre with Jem Serle broke two heads, the dead and the living,) arguments such as these might have some cogency at the Red Lion.

But he managed every body, as your gentle-mannered person is apt to do. Even the rude 'squires and rough farmers, his temporary masters, he managed, particularly as far as concerned the beat, and was sure to bring them round to his own peculiar fancies or prejudices, however strongly their own wishes might turn them aside from the direction indicated,

and however often Tom's sagacity in that instance might have been found at fault. Two spots in the large wild enclosures into which the heath had been divided were his especial favourites; the Hundred Acres, alias the Poor Allotment, alias the Burnt-Common—(Do any or all of these titles convey any notion of the real destination of that many-named place? a piece of moor-land portioned out to serve for fuel to the poor of the parish)—this was one. Oh the barrenness of this miserable moor! Flat, marshy, dingy, bare. Here that piece of green treachery, a bog; there parched, and pared, and shrivelled, and black with smoke and ashes; utterly desolate and wretched every where, except where amidst the desolation blossomed, as in mockery, the enamelled gentianella. No hares ever came there; they had too much taste. Yet thither would Tom lead his unwary employers; thither, however warned, or cautioned, or experienced, would he by reasoning or induction, or gentle persuasion, or actual fraud, entice the hapless gentlemen; and then to see him with his rabble of finders pacing up and down this precious "sitting-ground," (for so was Tom, thriftless liar, wont to call it,) pretending to look for game, counterfeiting a meuse; forging a form; and telling a story some ten years old of a famous hare once killed in that spot by his honour's favourite bitch Marygold. I never could thoroughly understand whether it were design, a fear that too many hares might be killed, or a real and honest mistake, a genuine prejudice in favour of the place, that influenced Tom Cordery in this point. Half the one, perhaps, and half the other. Mixed motives, let Pope and his disciples say what they will, are by far the commonest in this parti-coloured world. Or he had shared the fate of greater men, and lied till he believed—a coursing Cromwell, beginning in hypocrisy and ending in fanaticism. Another pet spot was the Gallows-piece, an enclosure almost as large as the Hundred Acres, where a gibbet had once borne the bodies of two murderers, with the chains and bones, even in

my remembrance, clanking and creaking in the wind. The gibbet was gone now ; but the name remained, and the feeling, deep, sad, and shuddering. The place, too, was wild, awful, fearful ; a heathy, furzy spot, sinking into broken hollows, where murderers might lurk ; a few withered pines at the upper end, and amongst them, half, hidden by the brambles, the stone in which the gallows had been fixed ;—the bones must have been mouldering beneath. All Tom's eloquence, seconded by two capital courses, failed to drag me thither a second time.

Tom was not, however, without that strong sense of natural beauty which they who live amongst the wildnesses and fastnesses of nature so often exhibit. One spot, where the common trenches on the civilized world, was scarcely less his admiration than mine. It is a high hill, half covered with furze, and heath, and broom, and sinking abruptly down to a large pond, almost a lake, covered with wild water-fowl. The ground richly clothed with wood,—oak, and beech, and elm, rises on the other side with equal abruptness, as if shutting in those glassy waters from all but the sky, which shines so brightly in their clear bosom ; just in the bottom peeps a small sheltered farm, whose wreaths of light smoke and the white glancing wings of the wild-ducks, as they flit across the lake, are all that give token of motion or of life. I have stood there in utter oblivion of greyhound or of hare, till moments have swelled to minutes, and minutes to hours ; and so has Tom, conveying, by his exclamations of delight at its "pleasantness," exactly the same feeling which a poet or a painter (for it breathes the very spirit of calm and sunshiny beauty that a master painter loves) would express by different but not truer praise. He called his own home "pleasant" too ; and there, though one loves to hear any home so called—there, I must confess, that favourite phrase, which I like almost as well as they who have no other, did seem rather misapplied. And yet it was finely placed, very finely. It

stood in a sort of defile, where a road almost perpendicular wound from the top of a steep abrupt hill, crowned with a tuft of old Scottish firs, into a dingle of fern and wild brushwood. A shallow, sullen stream oozed from the bank on one side, and, after forming a rude channel across the road, sank into a dark, deep pool, half hidden amongst the tallows. Behind these tallows, in a nook between them and the hill, rose the uncouth and shapeless cottage of Tom Cordery. It is a scene which hangs upon the eye and the memory, striking, grand, almost sublime, and above all eminently foreign. No English painter would choose such a subject for an English landscape; no one in a picture would take it for English. It might pass for one of those scenes which have furnished models to Salvator Rosa. Tom's cottage was, however, very thoroughly national and characteristic; a low, ruinous hovel, the door of which was fastened with a sedulous attention to security, that contrasted strangely with the tattered thatch of the roof, and the half-broken windows. No garden, no pigsty, no pens for geese, none of the usual signs of cottage habitation:—yet the house was covered with non-descript dwellings, and the very walls were animate with their extraordinary tenants: pheasants, partridges, rabbits, tame wild-ducks, half-tame hares, and their enemies by nature and education, the ferrets, terriers, and mongrels, of whom his retinue consisted. Great ingenuity had been evinced in keeping separate these jarring elements; and by dint of hutches, cages, fences, kennels, and half-a-dozen little hurdled enclosures, resembling the sort of courts which children are apt to build round their card-houses, peace was in general tolerably well preserved. Frequent sounds, however, of fear or of anger, as their several instincts were aroused, gave tokens that it was but a forced and hollow truce, and at such times the clamour was prodigious. Tom had the remarkable tenderness for animals when domesticated, which is so often found in those whose sole vocation seems to be their destruction in the field; and the

one long, straggling, unceiled, barn-like room, which served for kitchen, bed-chamber, and hall, was cumbered with bipeds and quadrupeds of all kinds and descriptions, the sick, the delicate, the newly caught, the lying-in. In the midst of this menagerie sat Tom's wife, (for he was married, though without a family—married to a woman lame of a leg as he himself was minus an arm,) now trying to quiet her noisy inmates, now to outscold them. How long his friend the keeper would have continued to wink at this den of live game, none can say: the roof fairly fell in during the deep snow of last winter, killing, as poor Tom observed, two as fine litters of rabbits as ever were kittenened. Remotely, I have no doubt that he himself fell a sacrifice to this misadventure. The overseer, to whom he applied to re-instate his beloved habitation, decided that the walls would never bear another roof, and removed him and his wife, as an especial favour, to a tidy, snug, comfortable room in the workhouse. The workhouse! From that hour poor Tom visibly altered. He lost his hilarity and independence. It was a change such as he had himself often inflicted, a complete change of habits, a transition from the wild to the tame. No labour was demanded of him; he went about as before, finding hares, killing rats, selling brooms, but the spirit of the man was departed. He talked of the quiet of his old abode, and the noise of the new; complained of children and other bad company; and looked down on his neighbours with the sort of contempt with which a cock pheasant might regard a barn-door fowl. Most of all did he, braced into a gipsy-like defiance of wet and cold, grumble at the warmth and dryness of his apartment. He used to foretell that it would kill him, and assuredly it did so. Never could the typhus fever have found out that wild hill side, or have lurked under that broken roof. The free touch of the air would have chased the dæmon. Alas, poor Tom! warmth, and snugness, and comfort, whole windows, and an entire ceiling, were the death of him. Alas, poor Tom!

AN OLD BACHELOR.

THERE is no effect of the subtle operation of the association of ideas more universal and more curious than the manner in which the most trivial circumstances recall particular persons to our memory. Sometimes these glances of recollection are purely pleasurable. Thus I have a double liking for May-day, as being the birth-day of a dear friend whose fair idea bursts upon me with the first sunbeam of that glad morning; and I can never hear certain airs of Mozart and Handel without seeming to catch an echo of that sweetest voice in which I first learnt to love them. Pretty often, however, the point of association is less elegant, and occasionally it is tolerably ludicrous. We happened to-day to have for dinner a couple of wild-ducks, the first of the season; and as the master of the house, who is so little of an epicure that I am sure he would never while he lived, out of its feathers, know a wild-duck from a tame,—whilst he, with a little affectation of science, was squeezing the lemon and mixing Cayenne pepper with the gravy, two of us exclaimed in a breath, “Poor Mr. Sidney!” —“Ay,” rejoined the squeezer of lemons, “poor Sidney! I think he would have allowed that these ducks were done even to half a turn.” And then he told the story more elaborately to a young visitor, to whom Mr. Sidney was unknown;—how, after eating the best part of a couple of wild-ducks, which all the company pronounced to be the finest and best dressed wild-ducks ever brought to table, that judicious critic in the gastronomic art limited the too sweeping praise by gravely asserting, that the birds were certainly excellent, and that the cookery would have been excellent also, had they not been roasted half a turn too much. Mr. Sidney has been dead these fifteen years; but no wild-ducks have ever ap-

peared on our homely board without recalling that observation. It is his memorable saying ; his one good thing.

Mr. Sidney was, as might be conjectured, an epicure ; he was also an old bachelor, a clergyman, and senior fellow of *** College, a post which he had long filled, being, although only a second son, so well provided for that he could afford to reject living after living in expectation of one favourite rectory, to which he had taken an early fancy from the pleasantness of the situation and the imputed salubrity of the air. Of the latter quality, indeed, he used to give an instance, which, however satisfactory as confirming his prepossession, could hardly have been quite agreeable, as preventing him from gratifying it ;—namely, the extraordinary and provoking longevity of the incumbent, who at upwards of ninety gave no sign of decay, and bade fair to emulate the age of old Parr.

Whilst waiting for the expected living, Mr. Sidney, who disliked a college residence, built himself a very pretty house in our neighbourhood, which he called his home ; and where he lived, as much as a love of Bath and Brighton and London and lords would let him. He counted many noble families amongst his near connexions, and passed a good deal of his time at their country seats—a life for which he was by character and habit peculiarly fitted.

In person he was a tall, stout, gentlemanly man, “about fifty, or by'r lady inclining to threescore,” with fine features, a composed gravity of countenance and demeanour, a bald head most accurately powdered, and a very graceful bow—quite the pattern of an elderly man of fashion. His conversation was in excellent keeping with the calm imperturbability of his countenance, and the sedate gravity of his manner,—smooth, dull common-place, exceedingly safe, and somewhat imposing. He spoke so little, that people really fell into the mistake of imagining that he thought ; and the tone of decision with which he would advance some second-hand opinion, was well calculated to confirm the mistake. Gravity was cer-

tainly his chief characteristic, and yet it was not a clerical gravity either. He had none of the generic marks of his profession. Although perfectly decorous in life and word and thought, no stranger ever took Mr. Sidney for a clergyman. He never did any duty any where, that ever I heard of, except the agreeable duty of saying grace before dinner ; and even that was often performed by some lay host, in pure forgetfulness of his guest's ordination. Indeed, but for the direction of his letters, and an eye to *** Rectory, I am persuaded that the circumstance might have slipped out of his own recollection.

His quality of old bachelor was more perceptible. There lurked under all his polish, well covered, but not concealed, the quiet selfishness, the little whims, the precise habits, the primness and priggishness of that disconsolate condition. His man Andrews, for instance, valet, groom, and body-servant abroad ; butler, cook, caterer, and major d'omo at home ; tall, portly, powdered, and black-coated as his master, and like him in all things but the knowing pig-tail which stuck out horizontally above his shirt-collar, giving a ludicrous dignity to his appearance ;—Andrews, who, constant as the dial pointed nine, carried up his chocolate and shaving water, and regular as “the chimes at midnight,” prepared his white-wine whey : who never forgot his gouty shoe in travelling, (once for two days he had a slight touch of that gentlemanly disorder,) and never gave him the newspaper unaired ;—to whom could this jewel of a valet, this matchless piece of clock-work, belong, but an old bachelor ? And his little dog Viper, unparagoned of terriers, black, sleek, sharp, and shrewish ; who would beg, and sneeze, and fetch and carry like a Christian ; eat olives and sweetmeats and mustard, drink coffee and wine and liqueurs ;—who but an old bachelor could have taught Viper his multifarious accomplishments ?

Little Viper was a most useful person in his way ; for although Mr. Sidney was a very creditable acquaintance to

meet on the king's highway, (your dull man, if he rides well, should never think of dismounting,) or even on the level ground of a carpet, in the crowd of a large party ; yet when he happened to drop in to take a family dinner—a pretty frequent habit of his when in the country—then Viper's talents were inestimable in relieving the ennui occasioned by that grave piece of gentility his master, “not only *dull* in himself, but the cause of *dulness* in others.” Any thing to pass away the heavy hours, till whist or piquet relieved the female world from his intolerable silence.

In other respects these visits were sufficiently perplexing. Every housewife can tell what a formidable guest is an epicure who comes to take pot-luck—how sure it is to be bad luck, especially when the unfortunate hostess lives five miles from a market-town. Mr. Sidney always came unseasonably, on washing-day or Saturday, or the day before a great party. So sure as we had a scrap dinner, so sure came he. My dear mother, who, with true benevolence and hospitality, cared much for her guest's comfort, and nothing for her own pride, used to grieve over his discomfiture, and try all that could be done by potted meats and omelettes, and little things tossed up on a sudden to amend the bill of fare. But cookery is an obstinate art, and will have its time ;—however you may force the component parts, there is no forcing a dinner. Mr. Sidney had the evil habit of arriving just as the last bell rang ; and in spite of all the hurry-scurry in the kitchen department, the new niceties and the old homely dishes were sure to disagree. There was a total want of keeping. The kickshaws were half raw, the solids were mere rags ; the vegetables were cold, the soup was scalding ; no shallots to the rump-steaks ; no mushrooms with the broiled chicken ; no fish ; no oysters ; no ice ; no pine-apple. Poor Mr. Sidney ! He must have had a great regard for us to put up with our bad dinners.

Perhaps the chance of a rubber had something to do with

his visits to our house. If there be such a thing as a ruling passion, the love of whist was his. Cards were not merely the amusement, but the business of his life. I do not mean as a money-making speculation ; for although he belonged to a fashionable club in London, and to every card-meeting of decent gentility within reach of his country home, he never went beyond a regular moderate stake, and could not be induced to bet even by the rashest defyer of calculation, or the most provoking undervaluer of his play. It always seemed to me, that he regarded whist as far too important and scientific a pursuit to be degraded into an affair of gambling. It had in his eyes all the dignity of a study ; an acquirement equally gentlemanly and clerical. It was undoubtedly his test of ability. He had the value of a man of family and a man of the world for rank, and wealth, and station, and dignities of all sorts. No human being entertained a higher respect for a king, a prince, a prime minister, a duke, a bishop, or a lord. But these were conventional feelings. His genuine and unfeigned veneration was reserved for him who played a good rubber, a praise he did not easily give. He was a capital player himself, and held all his country competitors, except one, in supreme and undisguised contempt, which they endured to admiration. I wonder they did not send him to Coventry. He was the most disagreeable partner in the world, and nearly as unpleasant an adversary ; for he not only enforced the Pythagorean law of science, which makes one hate whist so, but used to distribute quite impartially to every one at table little disagreeable observations on every card they played. It was not scolding, or grumbling, or fretting ; one has a sympathy with those expressions of feeling, and at the worst can scold again ; it was a smooth, polite commentary on the errors of the party, delivered in the calm tone of undoubted superiority with which a great critic will sometimes take a small poet, or a batch of poets, to task in a review. How the people could bear it !—but the world is a

good-natured world, and does not like a man the less for treating it scornfully.

So passed six evenings out of the seven with Mr. Sidney, for it was pretty well known that, on the rare occurrence of his spending a day at home without company, his factotum Andrews used to have the honour of being beaten by his master in a snug game at double dummy ! but what he did with himself on Sunday occasioned me some speculation. Never in my life did I see him take up a book, although he sometimes talked of Shakspeare and Milton, and Johnson and Burke, in a manner which proved that he had heard of such things ; and as to the newspaper, which he did read, that was generally conned over long before night ; besides he never exhibited spectacles, and I have a notion that he could not read newspaper type at night without them. How he could possibly get through the after coffee hours on a Sunday puzzled me long. Chance solved the problem. He came to call on us after church, and agreed to dine and sleep at our house. The moment tea was over, without the slightest apology or attempt at conversation, he drew his chair to the fire, set his feet on the fender, and fell fast asleep in the most comfortable and orderly manner possible. It was evidently a weekly habit. Every sense and limb seemed composed to it. Viper looked up in his face, curled himself round on the hearth-rug, and went to sleep too ; and Andrews, just as the clock struck twelve, came in to wake him, that he might go to bed. It was clearly an invariable custom ; a settled thing.

His house and grounds were kept in the neatest manner possible. There was something even disagreeable in the excessive nicety, the Dutch preciseness of the shining gravel walks, the smooth shaven turf of the lawn, and the fine-sifted mould of the shrubberies. A few dead leaves or scattered flowers, even a weed or two, any thing to take away from the artificial toy-like look of the place, would have been an improvement. Mr. Sidney, however, did not think so. He ac-

tually caused his gardener to remove those littering plants called roses and gum cistuses. Other flowers fared little better. No sooner were they in bloom, than he pulled them up for fear they should drop. In-doors, matters were still worse. The rooms and furniture were very handsome, abounding in the luxurious Turkey carpets, the sofas, easy chairs, and ottomans, which his habits required : and yet I never in my life saw any house which looked less comfortable. Every thing was so constantly in its place, so provokingly in order, so full of naked nicety, so thoroughly old-bachelorish. No work ! no books ! no music ! no flowers ! But for those two things of life, Viper and a sparkling fire, one might have thought the place uninhabited. Once a year, indeed, it gave signs of animation, in the shape of a Christmas party. That was Mr. Sidney's shining time. Nothing could exceed the smiling hospitality of the host, or the lavish profusion of the entertainment. It breathed the very spirit of a welcome splendidly liberal : and little Viper frisked and bounded, and Andrews's tail vibrated (I was going to say wagged) with cordiality and pleasure. Andrews, on these occasions, laid aside his "customary black" in favour of a blue coat and a white silk court waistcoat, with a light running pattern of embroidery and silver spangles, assumed to do honour to his master and the company. How much he enjoyed the applause which the wines and the cookery elicited from the gentlemen ; and how anxiously he would direct the ladies' attention to a MS. collection of riddles, the compilation of some deceased countess, laid on the drawing-room table for their amusement between dinner and tea. Once, I remember, he carried his attention so far as to produce a gone-by toy, called a bandalore, for the recreation of myself and another little girl, admitted by virtue of the Christmas holidays to this annual festival. Poor Andrews ! I am convinced that he considered the entertainment of the visitors quite as much his affair as his master's ; and certainly they both succeeded. Never did parties pass more

pleasantly. On those evenings Mr. Sidney even forgot to find fault at whist.

At last, towards the end of a severe winter, during which he had suffered much from repeated colds, the rectory of *** became vacant, and our worthy neighbour hastened to take possession. The day before his journey he called on us in the highest spirits, anticipating a renewal of health and youth in this favourite spot, and approaching nearer than I had ever heard him to a jest on the subject of looking out for a wife. Married or single, he made us promise to visit him during the ensuing summer. Alas ! long before the summer arrived, our poor friend was dead. He had waited for this living thirty years ; he did not enjoy it thirty days.

A VILLAGE BEAU.

THE finest young man in our village is undoubtedly Joel Brent, half-brother to my Lizzy. They are alike too ; as much alike as a grown-up person and a little child of different sexes well can be ; alike in a vigorous uprightness of form, light, firm, and compact as possible ; alike in the bright, sparkling, triumphant blue eye, the short curled upper lip, the brown wavy hair, the white forehead, and sunburnt cheeks, and, above all, in the singular spirit and gaiety of their countenance and demeanour, the constant expression of life and glee, to which they owe the best and rarest part of their attractiveness. They seem, and they are, two of the happiest and merriest creatures that ever trod on the green sward. Really to see Joel walking by the side of his team, (for this enviable mortal, the pride of our village, is by calling a carter,) to see him walking, on a fine sunny morning, by the side of his bell-team, the fore-horse decked with ribbons and flowers

like a countess on the birth-day, as consciously handsome as his driver, the long whip poised gracefully on his shoulder, his little sister in his hand, and his dog Ranger (a beautiful red and white spaniel—every thing that belongs to Joel is beautiful) frisking about them :—to see this group, and to hear the merry clatter formed by Lizzy's tongue, Joel's whistling, and Ranger's delightful bark, is enough to put an amateur of pleasant sounds and happy faces in good humour for the day.

It is a grateful sight in other respects, for Joel is a very picturesque person, just such an one as a painter would select for the foreground of some English landscape, where nature is shown in all her loveliness. His costume is the very perfection of rustic coquetry, of that grace, which all admire and few practise, the grace of adaptation, the beauty of fitness. No one ever saw Joel in that wretched piece of deformity a coat, or that still wretcheder apology for a coat a dock-tailed jacket. Broad-cloth, the "common stale" of peer and peasant, approaches him not; neither does "the poor creature," fustian. His upper garment consists of that prettier jacket without skirts,—call it for the more grace a doublet,—of dark velveteen, hanging open over his waistcoat, giving a Spanish or an Italian air to his whole appearance, and setting off to great advantage his trim yet manly shape. To this he adds a silk handkerchief, tied very loosely round his neck, a shirt collar open so as to show his throat, as you commonly see in the portraits of artists, very loose trowsers, and a straw hat. Sometimes in cold weather he throws over all a smock-frock, and last winter brought up a fashion amongst our lads, by assuming one of that light blue Waterloo, such as butchers wear. As soon as all his comrades had provided themselves with a similar piece of rustic finery, he abandoned his, and indeed generally sticks to his velveteen jacket, which, by some magical influence of cleanliness and neatness, always looks new. I cannot imagine how he contrives it, but dirt never hangs upon Joel; even a fall at cricket in the summer, or a tumble

on the ice in the winter, fails to soil him ; and he is so ardent in his diversions, and so little disposed to let his coxcombry interfere with his sports, that both have been pretty often tried ; the former especially.

Ever since William Grey's secession, which took place shortly after our great match, for no cause assigned, Joel has been the leader and chief of our cricketers. Perhaps, indeed, Joel's rapid improvement might be one cause of William's withdrawal, for, without attributing any thing like envy or jealousy to these fine young men, we all know that "two stars keep not their motion in one sphere," and so forth, and if it were absolutely necessary that either our "Harry Hotspur, or the Prince of Wales," should abdicate that fair kingdom the cricket-ground, I must say that I am content to retain our present champion. Joel is in my mind the better player, joining to William's agility and certainty of hand and eye, all the ardour, force, and gaiety of his own quick and lively spirit. The whole man is in the game, mind and body ; and his success is such as dexterity and enthusiasm united must always command. To be sure he is a *leetle* over eager, *that* I must confess, and does occasionally run out a slow mate ; but he is sure to make up for it by his own exertions, and after all what a delightful fault zeal is ! Now that we are on the subject of faults, it must be said, not that Joel has his share, which is of course, but that they are exceedingly venial, little shades that become him, and arise out of his brighter qualities as smoke from the flame. Thus, if he sometimes steals one of his active holidays for a revel or a cricket-match, he is sure to make up the loss to his master by a double portion of labour the next day ; and if now and then, at tide-times, he loiters in the chimney-corner at the Rose, rather longer than strict prudence might warrant, no one can hear his laugh and his song pouring through the open door, like the very voice of "jest and youthful jollity," without feeling certain that it is good fellowship, and not good liquor, that detains him. Indeed, so

much is he the delight of the country lads, who frequent that well-accustomed inn, so much is his company sought after in all rustic junketings, that I am only astonished at the strength of resolution, and power of resisting temptation, which he displays in going thither so seldom.

If our village lads be so fond of him, it is not to be doubted that our village maidens like him too. The pretty brunette, Sally Wheeler, who left a good service at B., to take in needle-work, and come home to her grandmother, she being, to use Sally's phrase, "unked for want of company," (N. B. Dame Wheeler is as deaf as a post, a cannon would not rouse her,) is thought, in our little world, to have had an eye to Joel in this excess of dutifulness. Miss Phoebe, the lass of the Rose, she also, before her late splendid marriage to the patten-maker, is said to have becurled and beflooned herself at least two tiers higher on club-nights, and Sundays, and holidays, and whenever there was a probable chance of meeting him. The gay recruiting serjeant, and all other beaux, were abandoned the instant he appeared; nay, it is even hinted, that the patten-maker owes his fair bride partly to pique at Joel's indifference. Then Miss Sophia Matthews, the schoolmistress on the lea, to whom in point of dignity Miss Phoebe was nothing, who wears a muff and a veil, walks mincingly, and tosses her head in the air, keeps a maid,—a poor little drab of ten years old; follows, as she says, a genteel profession,—I think she may have twenty scholars at eight-pence a week; and when she goes to dine with her brother, the collar-maker, hires a boy for a penny to carry her clogs;—Miss Sophia, it is well known, hath pretermitted her dignity in the matter of Joel; hath invited the whole family to tea, (only think of Joel at a tea-party!) hath spoken of him as "a person above the common; a respectable young man; one, who with a discreet and accomplished wife, a woman of reading and education," (Miss Sophia, in the days of her father, the late collar-maker of happy memory, before she "taught the young idea how to

shoot," had herself drunk deeply at that well of knowledge, the circulating library of B.,) "not too young," (Miss Sophia calls herself twenty-eight—I wonder what the register says!) "No brazen-faced gipsy, like Sally Wheeler," (Miss Sophia's cast of countenance is altogether different from Sally's dark and sparkling beauty, she being pink-eyed, red-haired, lean, pale, and freckled,) "or the jill-flirt Phœbe"—but to cut short an oration which, in spite of the lady's gentility, began to grow rather scurrilous, one fact was certain,—that Joel might, had he so chosen, have worn the crown matrimonial in Miss Sophia's territories, consisting of a freehold cottage, a little the worse for wear, a good garden, a capital orchard, and an extensive right of common; to say nothing of the fair damsel and her school, or, as she is accustomed to call it, her seminary.

Joel's proud bright eye glanced, however, carelessly over all. There was little perceptible difference of feeling in the gay distant smile, with which he regarded the coquettish advances of the pretty brunette, Sally Wheeler, or the respectful bow with which he retreated from the undignified condescension of Miss Sophia. He fluttered about our village belles like a butterfly over a bed of tulips; sometimes approaching them for a moment, and seeming then ready to fix, but oftener above and out of reach, a creature of a sprightlier element, too buoyant and volatile to light on an earthly flower. At last, however, the rover was caught; and our damsel, Harriet, had the glory of winning that indomitable heart.

Now Harriet is in all things Lucy's successor; in post, and favour, and beauty, and lovers. In my eye she is still prettier than Lucy; there is something so feminine and so attractive in her loveliness. She is a tall young woman, finely, though, for eighteen, rather fully, formed; with a sweet child-like face, a fair blooming complexion, a soft innocent smile, and the eye of a dove. Add to this a gentle voice, a quiet modest manner, and a natural gentility of appearance, and no wonder that

Harriet might vie with her predecessor in the number of her admirers. She inherited also a spice of her coquetry, although it was shown in so different a way that we did not immediately find it out. Lucy was a flirt active ; Harriet was a flirt passive : Lucy talked to her beaux ; Harriet only listened to hers : Lucy, when challenged on the number of her conquests, denied the thing, and blushed, and laughed, and liked to be laughed at ; Harriet, on a similar charge, gave no token of liking or denial, but said quietly that she could not help it, and went on winning hearts by dozens, prodigal of smiles but chary of love, till Joel came, "pleased her by manners most unlike her own," and gave to her delicate womanly beauty the only charms it wanted—sensibility and consciousness.

The manner in which we discovered this new flirtation, which, unlike her others, was concealed with the pretty reserve and mystery that wait on true love, was sufficiently curious. We had noted Joel more frequently than common about the house : sometimes he came for Lizzy ; sometimes to bring news of a cricket-match ; sometimes to ask questions about bats and balls ; sometimes to see if his dog Ranger had followed my May ; sometimes to bring me a nosegay. All this occasioned no suspicion ; we were too glad to see Joel to think of inquiring why he came. But when the days shortened, and evening closed in dark and cold before his work was done, and cricket and flowers were over, and May and Lizzy safe in their own warm beds, and poor Joel's excuses fairly at an end ; then it was, that in the after-dinner pause, about seven, when the clatter of plates and dishes was over, that the ornithological ear of the master of the house, a dabbler in natural history, was struck by a regular and melodious call, the note, as he averred, of a sky-lark. That a sky-lark should sing in front of our house, at seven o'clock in a December evening, seemed, to say the least, rather startling. But our ornithologist happening to agree with Mr. White, of Selborne, in the opinion

that many more birds sing by night than is commonly supposed, and becoming more and more confident of the identity of the note, thought the thing possible ; and not being able to discover any previous notice of the fact, had nearly inserted it, as an original observation, in the *Naturalist's Calendar*, when running out suddenly one moon-light night, to try for a peep at the nocturnal songster, he caught our friend Joel, whose accomplishments in this line we had never dreamt of, in the act of whistling a summons to his lady love.

For some weeks our demure coquette listened to none but this bird-like wooing ; partly from pride in the conquest ; partly from real preference ; and partly, I believe, from a lurking consciousness that Joel was by no means a lover to be trifled with. Indeed he used to threaten, between jest and earnest, a ducking in the goose-pond opposite, to whoever should presume to approach his fair intended ; and the waters being high and muddy, and he at all points a formidable rival, most of her former admirers were content to stay away. At last, however, she relapsed into her old sin of listening. A neighbouring farmer gave a ball in his barn, to which both our lovers were invited and went. Now Harriet loves dancing, and Joel, though arrayed in a new jacket, and thin cricketing-pumps, would not dance ; he said he could not, but that, as Harriet observes, is incredible. I agree with her that the gentleman was too fine. He chose to stand and look on, and laugh, and make laugh, the whole evening. In the mean time his fair betrothed picked up a new partner, and a new beau, in the shape of a freshly-arrived carpenter, a grand martial-looking figure, as tall as a grenadier, who was recently engaged as foreman to our civil wheeler, and who, even if he had heard of the denunciation, was of a size and spirit to set Joel and the goose-pond at defiance,—David might as well have attempted to goose-pond Goliath ! He danced the whole evening with his pretty partner, and afterwards saw her home ; all of which Joel bore with great philosophy. But the next

night he came again ; and Joel approaching to give his own sky-lark signal, was startled to see another lover leaning over the wicket, and his faithless mistress standing at the half-open door, listening to the tall carpenter, just as complacently as she was wont to do to himself. He passed on without speaking, turned down the little lane that leads to Dame Wheeler's cottage, and in less than two minutes Harriet heard the love-call sounded at Sally's gate. The effect was instantaneous ; she discarded the tall carpenter at once and for ever, locked and bolted the door, and sat down to work or to cry in the kitchen. She did not cry long. The next night we again heard the note of the sky-lark louder and more brilliant than ever, echoing across our court, and the lovers, the better friends for their little quarrel, have been as constant as turtle-doves ever since.

THE TALKING GENTLEMAN.

THE lords of the creation, who are generally (to do them justice) tenacious enough of their distinctive and peculiar faculties and powers, have yet by common consent made over to the females the single gift of loquacity. Every man thinks and says that every woman talks more than he : it is the creed of the whole sex,—the debates and law reports notwithstanding. And every masculine eye that has scanned my title has already, I doubt not, looked to the *errata*, suspecting a mistake in the gender ; but it is their misconception, not my mistake. I do not (Heaven forbid !) intend to impugn or abrogate our female privilege ; I do not dispute that we do excel, generally speaking, in the use of the tongue ; I only mean to assert that one gentleman does exist, (whom I have the pleasure of knowing intimately,) who stands pre-eminent and unrivalled in the art

of talking,—unmatched and unapproached by man, woman, or child. Since the decease of my poor friend “the Talking Lady,” who dropped down speechless in the midst of a long story about nine weeks ago, and was immediately known to be dead by her silence, I should be at a loss where to seek a competitor to contend with him in a race of words, and I should be still more puzzled to find one that can match him in wit, pleasantry, or good-humour.

My friend is usually called Harry L., for, though a man of substance, a lord of land, a magistrate, a field-officer of militia, nobody ever dreamed of calling him *Mister* or Major, or by any such derogatory title—he is and will be all his life plain Harry, the name of universal good-will. He is indeed the pleasantest fellow that lives. His talk (one can hardly call it conversation, as that would seem to imply another interlocutor, something like reciprocity) is an incessant flow of good things, like Congreve’s comedies without a replying speaker, or Joe Miller laid into one; and its perpetual stream is not lost and dispersed by diffusion, but runs in one constant channel, playing and sparkling like a fountain, the delight and ornament of our good town of B.

Harry L. is a perfect example of provincial reputation, of local fame. There is not an urchin in the town that has not heard of him, nor an old woman that does not chuckle by anticipation at his approach. The citizens of B. are as proud of him as the citizens of Antwerp were of the *Chapeau de Paille*, and they have the advantage of the luckless Flemings in the certainty that their boast is not to be purchased. Harry, like the Flemish beauty, is native to the spot; for he was born at B., educated at B., married at B.,—though, as his beautiful wife brought him a good estate in a distant part of the country, there seemed at that epoch of his history some danger of his being lost to our ancient borough; but he is a social and gregarious animal; so he leaves his pretty place in Devonshire to take care of itself, and lives here in the midst of a

hive. His tastes are not at all rural. He is no sportsman, no farmer, no lover of strong exercise. When at B., his walks are quite regular; from his own house, on one side of the town, to a gossip-shop called "literary," on the other, where he talks and reads newspapers, and others read newspapers and listen: thence he proceeds to another house of news, similar in kind, though differing in name, in an opposite quarter, where he and his hearers undergo the same process, and then he returns home, forming a pretty exact triangle of about half a mile. This is his daily exercise, or rather his daily walk; of exercise he takes abundance, not only in talking, (though that is nearly as good to open the chest as the dumb-bells,) but in a general restlessness and fidgettiness of person, the result of his ardent and nervous temperament, which can hardly endure repose of mind or body. He neither gives rest nor takes it. His company is, indeed, in one sense (only one) fatiguing. Listening to him tires you like a journey. You laugh till you are forced to lie down. The medical gentlemen of the place are aware of this, and are accustomed to exhort delicate persons to abstain from Harry's society, just as they caution them against temptations in point of amusement or of diet—pleasant but dangerous. Choleric gentlemen should also avoid him, and such as love to have the last word; for, though never provoked himself, I cannot deny that he is occasionally tolerably provoking,—in politics especially—(and he is an ultra-liberal, quotes Cobbett, and goes rather too far)—in politics he loves to put his antagonist in a fume, and generally succeeds, though it is nearly the only subject on which he ever listens to an answer—chiefly, I believe, for the sake of a reply, which is commonly some trenchant repartee, that cuts off the poor answer's head like a razor. Very determined speakers would also do well to eschew his company—though in general I never met with any talker to whom other talkers were so ready to give way; perhaps because he keeps them in such incessant laughter, that they are not conscious of their

silence. To himself the number of his listeners is altogether unimportant. His speech flows not from vanity or lust of praise, but from sheer necessity;—the reservoir is full, and runs over. When he has no one else to talk to, he can be content with his own company, and talks to himself, being, beyond a doubt, greater in a soliloquy than any man off the stage. Where he is not known, this habit sometimes occasions considerable consternation and very ridiculous mistakes. He has been taken alternately for an actor, a poet, a man in love, and a man beside himself. Once in particular, at Windsor, he greatly alarmed a philanthropic sentinel, by holding forth at his usual rate whilst pacing the terrace alone; and but for the opportune arrival of his party, and their assurances that it was only “the gentleman’s way,” there was some danger that the benevolent soldier might have been tempted to desert his post to take care of him. Even after this explanation, he gazed with a doubtful eye at our friend, who was haranguing himself in great style, sighed and shook his head, and finally implored us to look well after him till he should be safe off the terrace.—“You see, Ma’am,” observed the philanthropist in scarlet, “it is an awkward place for any body troubled with vagaries. Suppose the poor soul should take a fancy to jump over the wall!”

In his externals he is a well-looking gentleman of forty, or thereabout; rather thin, and rather pale, but with no appearance of ill health, nor any other peculiarity, except the remarkable circumstance of the lashes of one eye being white, which gives a singular non-resemblance to his organs of vision. Every one perceives the want of uniformity, and few detect the cause. Some suspect him of what farriers call a wall-eye; some think he squints. He himself talks familiarly of his two eyes, the black and the white, and used to liken them to those of our fine Persian cat, (now, alas! no more,) who had, in common with his feline countrymen, one eye blue as a sapphire, the other yellow as a topaz. The dissimilarity

certainly rather spoils his beauty, but greatly improves his wit,—I mean the sense of his wit in others. It arrests attention, and predisposes to laughter; is an outward and visible sign of the comical. No common man has two such eyes. They are made for fun.

In his occupations and pleasures Harry is pretty much like other provincial gentlemen; loves a rubber, and jests all through, at aces, kings, queens, and knaves, bad cards and good, at winning and losing, scolding and praise;—loves a play, at which he out-talks the actors whilst on the stage,—to say nothing of the advantage he has over them in the intervals between the acts;—loves music, as a good accompaniment to his grand solo;—loves a contested election above all. That is his real element,—that din and uproar and riot and confusion! To ride that whirlwind and direct that storm is his triumph of triumphs! He would make a great sensation in parliament himself, and a pleasant one. (By the way, he was once in danger of being turned out of the gallery for setting all around him in a roar.) Think what a fine thing it would be for the members to have mirth introduced into the body of the house! to be sure of an honest, hearty, good-humoured laugh every night during the session! Besides, Harry is an admirable speaker, in every sense of the word. Jestings is indeed his forte, because he wills it so to be; and, therefore, because he chooses to play jigs and country dances on a noble organ, even some of his staunchest admirers think he can play nothing else. There is no quality of which men so much grudge the reputation as versatility of talent. Because he is so humorous, they will hardly allow him to be eloquent; and, because he is so very witty, find it difficult to account him wise. But let him go where he has not that mischievous fame, or let him bridle his jests and rein in his humour only for one short hour, and he will pass for a most reverend orator,—logical, pathetic, and vigorous above all.—But how can I wish him to cease jesting even for an hour? Who would

exchange the genial fame of good-humoured wit for the stern reputation of wisdom? Who would choose to be Socrates, if with a wish he could be Harry L.?

MRS. MOSSE.

I do not know whether I ever hinted to the courteous reader that I had been in my younger days, without prejudice to my present condition, somewhat of a spoiled child. The person who, next after my father and mother, contributed most materially to this melancholy catastrophe, was an old female domestic, Mrs. Elizabeth Mosse, who, at the time of her death, had lived nearly sixty years in our house, and that of my maternal grandfather. Of course, during the latter part of this long period, the common forms and feelings of servant and master were entirely swept away. She was a member of the family, an humble friend—happy are they who have such a friend!—living as she liked, up-stairs or down, in the kitchen or the nursery, considered, consulted, and beloved by the whole household.

Mossey (for by that fondling nursery name she best liked to be called) had never been married, so that the family of her master and mistress had no rival in her heart, and on me, their only child, was concentrated that intensity of affection which distinguishes the attachments of age. I loved her dearly too, as dearly as a spoiled child can love its prime spoiler,—but, oh! how selfish was my love, compared to the depth, the purity, the indulgence, the self-denial of hers! Dear Mossey! I shall never do her justice; and yet I must try.

Mrs. Mosse, in her appearance, was in the highest degree what is called respectable. She must have been tall when young; for even when bent with age, she was above the middle

height, a large-made though meagre woman. She walked with feebleness and difficulty, from the attacks of hereditary gout, which not even her temperance and activity could ward off. There was something very interesting in this tottering helplessness, clinging to the balusters, or holding by doors and chairs like a child. It had nothing of vulgar lameness; it told of age, venerable age. Out of doors she seldom ventured, unless on some sunny afternoon I could entice her into the air, and then once round the garden, or to the lawn gate and back again, was the extent of her walk, propped by a very aristocratic walking-stick (once the property of a duchess) as tall as herself, with a hooked ivory handle, joined to the cane by a rim of gold. Her face was as venerable as her person. She must have been very handsome; indeed she was so still, as far as regular and delicate features, a pale brown complexion, dark eyes still retaining the intelligence and animation of youth, and an expression perfectly gentle and feminine, could make her so. It is one of the worst penalties that woman pays to age, that often when advanced in life, the face loses its characteristic softness; in short, but for the difference in dress, many an old woman's head might pass for that of an old man. This misfortune could never have happened to Mossy. No one could mistake the sex of that sweet countenance.

Her dress manifested a good deal of laudable coquetry, a nice and minute attention to the becoming. I do not know at what precise date her costume was fixed: but, as long as I remember her, fixed it was, and stood as invariably at one point of fashion, as the hand of an unwound clock stands at one hour of the day. It consisted (to begin from the feet and describe upwards) of black shoes of shining stuff, with very pointed toes, high heels, and a peak up the instep, showing to advantage her delicately white cotton stockings, and peeping beneath petticoats so numerous and substantial, as to give a rotundity and projection almost equal to a hoop. Her exterior

garment was always quilted, varying according to the season or the occasion from simple stuff, or fine white dimity, or an obsolete manufacture called Marseilles, up to silk and satin ;—for, as the wardrobes of my three grandmothers (pahaw ! I mean my grandfather's three wives !) had fallen to her lot, few gentlewomen of the last century could boast a greater variety of silks that stood on end. Over the quilted petticoat came an open gown, whose long waist reached to the bottom of her stiff stays, and whose very full tail, about six inches longer than the petticoat, would have formed a very inconvenient little train, if it had been permitted to hang down ; but that inconvenience never happened, and could scarcely have been contemplated by the designer. The tail was constantly looped up, so as to hang behind in a sort of bunchy festoon, exhibiting on each side the aforesaid petticoat. In material the gown also varied with the occasion, although it was always either composed of dark cotton, or of the rich silks and satins of my grandmammies' wardrobe. The sleeves came down just below the elbow, and were finished by a narrow white ruffle meeting her neat mittens. On her neck she wore a snow-white double muslin kerchief, pinned over the gown in front, and confined by an apron also of muslin ; and, over all, a handsome silk shawl, so pinned back as to show a part of the snowy neck-kerchief. Her head-dress was equally becoming, and more particularly precise ; for if ever she betrayed an atom of old-maidishness, it was on the score of her caps. From a touch of the gout in her hands, which had enlarged and stiffened the joints, she could do no work which required nicety, and the successive lady's maids, on whom the operation devolved, used to say that they would rather make up ten caps for their mistress than one for Mrs. Mosse ; and yet the construction seemed simple enough. A fine plain clear-starched caul, sticking up rather high and peaked in front, was plaited on a Scotch gauze head-piece ; (I remember there used to be exactly six plaits on each side—woe to the damsel who should

put more or less !) and, on the other side, a border, consisting of a strip of fine muslin, edged with narrow lace, clear-starched and crimped, was plaited on with equal precision. In one part of this millinery I used to assist. I dearly loved to crimp Mossy's frills, and she with her usual indulgence used frequently to let me, keeping however a pretty close eye on her laces and muslins, whilst I was passing them with triumphant rapidity between the small wooden machine notched longitudinally, and the corresponding roller. Perhaps a greater proof of indulgence could hardly have been shown, since she must, during this operation, have been in double fear for her own cap strips, which did occasionally get a rent, and for my fingers, which were sometimes well pinched—then she would threaten that I should never crimp her muslin again—a *never* which seldom lasted beyond the next cap-making. The head-piece was then concealed by a satin riband fastened in a peculiar bow, something between a bow and a puffing behind, whilst the front was adorned with an equally peculiar small knot, of which the two bows were pinned down flat, and the two ends left sticking up, cut into scallops of a prodigious regularity. The purchase of the ribands formed another branch of the cap-making department to which I laid claim. From the earliest period at which I could distinguish one colour from another, I had been purveyor of ribands to Mossy, and indeed at all fairs, or whenever I received a present, or entered a shop, (and I was so liberally supplied that there was nothing like generosity in the case,) it was the first and pleasantest destination of money that occurred to me:—so that the dear woman used to complain, that Miss bought her so many ribands, that they spoiled in keeping. We did not quite agree either in our taste. White, as both acknowledged, was the only wear for Sundays and holidays; but then she loved plain white, and I could not always control a certain wandering inclination for figured patterns and pearl edges. If Mossy had an aversion to any thing, it was to a pearl edge. I never could

persuade her to wear that simple piece of finery but once ; and then she made as many wry faces as a child eating olives, and stood before a glass eyeing the obnoxious riband with so much discomposure, that I was fain to take it out myself, and promise to buy no more pearl edges. The every-day ribands were coloured ; and there, too, we had our little differences of taste and opinion. Both agreed in the propriety of grave colours ; but then my reading of a grave colour was not always the same as hers. My eyes were not old enough. She used to accuse my French greys of blueness, and my crimsons of redness, and my greens of their greenness. She had a *penchant* for brown, and to brown I had a repugnance only to be equalled by that which she professed towards a pearl edge ;—indeed I retain my dislike to this hour ;—it is such an exceedingly cross and frumpish-looking colour—and then its ugliness ! Show me a brown flower ! No ! I could not bring myself to buy brown ;—so, after fighting many battles about grey and green, we at last settled on purple as a sort of neutral tint, a hue which pleased both parties. To return to the cap which we have been so long making—the finish both to that and to my description was a strip of crimped muslin, with edging on both sides to match the border, quilled on a piece of tape, and fastened on the cap at each ear. This she called the *chinnum*. A straight short row of hair, rather grey, but still very dark for her age, just appeared under the plaited lace ; and a pair of silver-mounted spectacles completed her equipment. If I live to the age of seventy, I will dress so too, with an exception of the stiff stays. Only a waist native to the fashion could endure that whalebone armour.

Her employments were many and various. No work was required of her from her mistress ; but idleness was misery to her habits of active usefulness, and it was astonishing how much those crippled fingers could do. She preferred coarse needle-work, as it was least difficult to her eyes and hands ; and she attended also to those numerous and undefined avoca-

tions of a gentleman's family, which come under the denomination of odd jobs—shelling peas, paring apples, splitting French beans, washing china, darning stockings, hemming and mending dusters and house-cloths, making cabbage-nets, and knitting garters. These were her daily avocations, the amusements which she loved. The only more delicate operation of needle-work that she ever undertook was the making of pincushions, a manufacture in which she delighted—not the quips and quiddities of these degenerate days, little bits of riband, and pasteboard, and gilt paper, in the shape of books or butterflies, by which, at charitable repositories, half-a-dozen pins are smuggled into a lady's pocket, and shillings and half-crowns are smuggled out;—no; Mossy's were real solid old-fashioned silken pincushions, such as Autolycus might have carried about amongst his pedlery-ware, square and roomy, and capable, at a moderate computation, of containing a whole paper of *short-whites*, and another of *mid-dlings*. It was delightful to observe her enjoyment of this play-work; the conscious importance with which she produced her satins and brocades, and her cards of sewing silks (she generally made a whole batch at once)—the deliberation with which she assorted the colours;—the care with which she tacked and fitted side to side, and corner to corner;—the earnestness with which, when all was sewed up except one small aperture for the insertion of the stuffing, she would pour in the bran, or stow in the wool:—then the care with which she poked the stuffing into every separate corner, ramming it down with all her strength, and making the little bag (so to say) hold more than it would hold, until it became almost as hard as a cricket-ball;—then how she drew the aperture together by main force, putting so many last stitches, fastening off with such care;—and then distributing them to all around her, (for her lady-like spirit would have scorned the idea of selling them,) and always reserving the gayest and the prettiest for me. Dear old soul! I have several of them still.

But, if I should begin to enumerate all the instances of

kindness which I experienced at her hands, through the changes and varieties of troublesome childhood and fantastic youth ; from the time when I was a puling baby, to the still more exacting state of a young girl at home in the holidays, I should never know when to end. Her sweet and loving temper was self-rewarded. She enjoyed the happiness she gave. Those were pleasant evenings when my father and mother were engaged in the Christmas-dinner visits of a gay and extensive neighbourhood, and Mrs. Mosse used to put on her handsomest shawl, and her kindest smile, and totter up stairs to drink tea with me, and keep me company. From those evenings I imbibed, in the first place, a love of strong green tea, for which gentlewomanly excitation Mossy had a remarkable predilection ; secondly, a very discreditable and unlady-like partiality, of which I am quite ashamed, which I keep a secret from my most intimate friends, and would not mention for the world—a sort of sneaking kindness for her favourite game of cribbage ; an old-fashioned vulgarity, which, in my mind, beats the genteeler pastimes of whist and picquet, and every game, except quadrille, out and out. I make no exception in favour of chess, because, thanks to my stupidity, I never could learn that recondite diversion ; moreover, judging from the grave faces and fatiguing silence of the initiated, I cannot help suspecting that, board for board, we cribbage-players are as well amused as they. Dear Mossy could neither feel to deal and shuffle, nor see to peg ; so that the greater part of the business fell to my share. The success was pretty equally divided. Three rubbers were our stint ; and we were often game and game in the last before victory declared itself. She was very anxious to beat, certainly—(N.B. we never played for any thing)—she liked to win ; and yet she did not quite like that I should lose. If we could both have won—if it had been four-handed cribbage, and she my partner—still there would have been somebody to be beaten and pitied, but then that somebody would not have been “Miss.”

The cribbage hour was pleasant ; but I think the hours of chat which preceded and followed it were pleasanter still. Mossy was a most agreeable companion, sensible, modest, simple, shrewd, with an exactness of recollection, an honesty of memory, that gave exceeding interest to her stories. You were sure that you heard the truth. There was one striking peculiarity in her manner of talking, or rather one striking contrast. The voice and accent were quite those of a gentlewoman, as sweet-toned and correct as could be ; the words and their arrangement were altogether those of a common person, provincial and ungrammatical in every phrase and combination. I believe it is an effect of association, from the little slips in her grammar, that I have contracted a most un-scholar-like prejudice in favour of false syntax, which is so connected in my mind with right notions, that I no sooner catch the sound of bad English than I begin to listen for good sense ; and really they often go together, (always supposing that the bad English be not of the order called slang,) they meet much more frequently than those exclusive people, ladies and gentlemen, are willing to allow. In her they were always united. But the charm of her conversation was in the old family stories, and the unconscious peeps at old manners which they afforded.

My grandfather, with whom she had lived in his first wife's time, full twenty years before my mother's birth, was a most respectable clergyman, who, after passing a few years in London amongst the wits and poets of the day, seeing the star of Pope in its decline, and that of Johnson in its rise, had retired into the country, where he held two adjoining livings of considerable value, both of which he served for above forty years, until the duty becoming too severe, he resigned one of them under an old-fashioned notion, that he who did the duty ought to receive the remuneration. I am very proud of my venerable ancestor. We have a portrait of him taken shortly after he was ordained, in his gown and band, with a curious

flowing wig, something like that of a judge, fashionable doubtless at the time, but which at present rather discomposes one's notions of clerical costume. He seems to have been a dark little man, with a sensible countenance, and a pair of black eyes, that even in the picture look you through. He was a votary of the Muses too; a contributor to Lewis's Miscellany; (did my readers ever hear of that collection?) translated Horace, as all gentlemen do; and wrote love-verses which had the unusual good fortune of obtaining their object, being, as Mrs. Mosse was wont to affirm, the chief engine and implement by which at fifty he gained the heart of his third wife, my real grandmamma, the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring squire. Of Dr. R., his wives, and his sermons, the bishops who visited, and the poets who wrote to him, Mossy's talk was mainly composed; chiefly of the wives.

Mrs. R., the first, was a fine London lady, a widow, and considerably older than her spouse, inasmuch as my grandpapa's passion for her commenced when he and her son, by a former husband, were school-fellows at Westminster. Mrs. Mosse never talked much of her, and, I suspect, did not much like her, though, when closely questioned, she would say that madam was a fine, portly lady, stately and personable, but rather too high. Her son made a sad *mesalliance*. He ran away with the sexton's daughter, an adventure which cost the sexton his post, and his mother her pride: she never looked up after it. That disgrace, and a cold caught by bumping on a pillion six miles through the rain, sent her to the grave.

Of the second Mrs. R. little remains on record, except a gown and petticoat of primrose silk, curiously embossed and embroidered with gold and silver thread and silks of all colours, in an enormous running pattern of staring flowers wonderfully unlike nature; also various recipes in the family receipt-book, which show a delicate Italian hand, and a bold originality of orthography. The chief event of her married life appears to have been the small-pox. She and two of her

sisters, and Mrs. Mosse, were all inoculated together. The other servants, who had not gone through the disorder, were sent out of the house: Dr. R. himself took refuge with a neighbouring friend, and the patients were consigned to the care of two or three nurses, gossips by profession, hired from the next town. The best parlour, (in those days drawing-rooms were not,) was turned into an hospital; a quarantine, almost as strict as would be required in the plague, was kept up, and the preparation, the disease, and the recovery, consumed nearly two months. Mrs. Mosse always spoke of it as one of the pleasant passages of her life. None of them suffered much; there was nothing to do, plenty of gossiping; a sense of self-importance, such as all prisoners must feel more or less; and for amusement they had Pamela, the Spectator, and Sir Charles Grandison. My grandfather had a very fine library; but Sir Charles was a female book, having been purchased by the joint contributions of six young ladies, and circulated amongst them once a year, sojourning two months with each fair partner, till death or marriage broke up the *coterie*. Is not that fame?—Well, the second Mrs. R. died in the course of time, though not of the small-pox: and my grandfather, faithful to his wives, but not to their memories, married again as usual.

His third adventure in that line was particularly happy; for my grandmother, besides being a celebrated beauty, appears to have been one of the best and kindest women that ever gladdened a country home. She had a large household; for the tithes of one rich rectory were taken in kind, and the glebe cultivated; so that the cares of a farm-house were added to the hospitality of a man of good fortune, and to the sort of stateliness which in those primitive days appertained to a doctor of divinity. The superintendence of that large household seems to have been at once her duty and her delight. It was a plenty and festivity almost resembling that of Camacho's wedding, guided by a wise and liberal economy, and a spirit

of indefatigable industry. Oh the saltings, the picklings, the preservings, the cake-makings, the unnamed and unnameable confectionery doings over which she presided ! The very titles of her territories denoted the extent of her stores. The apple-room, the pear-bin, the cheese-loft, the minced-meat closet, were household words as familiar in Mossy's mouth as the dairy or the poultry-yard. And my grandmamma was no hoarder for hoarding's sake, no maker of good things which were not to be eaten—as I have sometimes noted amongst your managing ladies ; the object of her cares and stores was to contribute to the comfort of all who came within her influence. The large parsonage-house was generally overflowing with guests ; and from the Oxford professor, who, with his wife, children, servants, and horses, passed his vacations there, to the poor pew-opener, who came with her little ones at tide-times, all felt the charm of her smiling graciousness, her sweet and cheerful spirit, her open hand and open heart. It is difficult to imagine a happier couple than my venerable grandfather and his charming wife. He retained to the last his studious habits, his love of literature, and his strong and warm family affections ; while she cast the sunshine of her innocent gaiety over his respectable age, proud of his scholarship, and prouder still of his virtues. Both died long ago. But Mossy was an "honest chronicler," and never weary of her theme. Even the daily airings of the good doctor, (who, in spite of his three wives, had a little of the peculiar preciseness in his studies and his exercise, which one is apt to attribute exclusively to that dreary person, an old bachelor,) even those airings from twelve to two, four miles on the turnpike-road and four miles back, with the fat horses and the grey-haired coachman, became vivid and characteristic in her description. The very carriage-dog, Sancho, was individualized ; we felt that he belonged to the people and the time.

Of these things we talked, mingled with many miscellaneous anecdotes of the same date ;—how an electioneering duke

saluted madam, and lost master's interest by the freedom ; how Sir Thomas S., the Lovelace of his day, came in his chariot and six, full twenty miles out of his way, to show himself to Miss Fanny in a Spanish masquerade-dress, white satin slashed with blue, a blue cloak embroidered with silver, and point-lace that might have won any woman's heart, except that of his fair but obdurate mistress ; and, lastly, how Henry Fielding, when on a visit in the neighbourhood, had been accustomed to come and swing the children in the great barn ; he had even swung Mossy herself, to her no small edification and delight—only think of being chucked backwards and forwards by the man who wrote about Parson Adams and 'Squire Allworthy ! I used to envy her that felicity. Then from authors we got to books. She could not see in my time to read any thing but the folio Bible, and Common Prayer-Book, with which my dear mother had furnished her ; but in her younger days she had seen or heard parts at least of a variety of books, and entered into them with a very keen though uncritical relish. Her chief favourites were, the Pilgrim's Progress, Don Quixote, Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe, and the equally apocryphal but still truer-seeming History of the Plague in London, by the same author, all of which she believed with the most earnest simplicity. I used frequently to read to her the passages she liked best ; and she in her turn would repeat to me songs and ballads, good, bad, and indifferent—a strange medley, and strangely confounded in her memory ; and so the time passed till ten o'clock. Those were pleasant evenings for her and for me.

I have sometimes, on recollection, feared that her down-stair life was less happy. All that the orders of a mistress could effect for her comfort was done. But we were rich then, unluckily ; and there were skip-jacks of footmen, and surly coachmen, and affected waiting-maids, and vixenish cooks, with tempers redhot like their coals, to vex and tease our dear old

woman. She must have suffered greatly between her ardent zeal for her master's interest, and that strange principle of concealing evil doings which servants call honour, and of which she was perpetually the slave and the victim. She had another infirmity, too, an impossibility of saying no, which, added to an unbounded generosity of temper, rendered her the easy dupe of the artful and the designing. She would give any thing to the appearance of want, or the pretence of affection; in short, to importunity, however clothed. It was the only point of weakness in her character; and to watch that she did not throw away her own little comforts, to protect her from the effects of her over-liberality, was the chief care of her mistress. Three inferior servants were successively turned away for trespassing on Mossy's goodness, drinking her green tea, eating her diet-bread, begging her gowns. But the evil was incurable; she could dispense with any pleasure, except that of giving. So she lived on, beloved as the kind, the gentle, and the generous must be, till I left school, an event that gave her great satisfaction.

We passed the succeeding spring in London; and she took the opportunity to pay a long-promised visit to a half-nephew and niece, or rather a half-niece and her husband, who lived in Prince's-street, Barbican. Mrs. Beck (one naturally mentions her first, as the person of most consequence) was the only real woman who ever came up to the magnificent abstract idea of the "fat woman of Brentford," the only being for whom Sir John Falstaff might have passed undetected. She was, indeed, a mountain of flesh, exuberant, rubicund, and bearded like a man; and she spoke in a loud, deep, mannish voice, a broad Wiltshire dialect; but she was hearty and jovial withal, a thorough good-fellow in petticoats. Mr. Beck, on the other hand, was a little insignificant, perking, sharp-featured man, with a Jerry-Sneak expression in his pale whey-face, a thin squeaking voice, and a Cockney accent. He had been lucky enough to keep a little shop in an inde-

pendent borough, at the time of a violently contested election ; and having adroitly kept back his vote till votes rose to their full value, (I hope this is no breach of privilege,) and then voted on the stronger side, he was at the time of which I speak comfortably settled in the excise as a tide-waiter, had a pretty neat house, brought up his family in good repute, wore a flaming red waistcoat, attended a dissenting meeting, and owed no man a shilling.

These good people were very fond of their aunt, who had, indeed, before they were so well off, shown them innumerable kindnesses. Perhaps there might be in the case a little gratitude for favours to come ; for she had three or four hundred pounds to bequeath, partly her own savings, and partly a legacy from a distant relative ; and they were her natural heirs. However that might be, they paid her all possible attention, and when we were about to return into the country, petitioned so vehemently for a few weeks more, that, yielding to the above-mentioned infirmity, she consented to stay. I had myself been the ambassadress to Barbican to fetch our dear old friend ; and I remember, as if it were yesterday, how earnestly I entreated her to come with me, and how seriously I lectured Mrs. Beck for her selfishness, in wishing to keep her aunt in London during the heat of June. I even, after taking leave, sprang out of the carriage, and ran again up stairs to persuade her to come with me. Mossy's wishes were evidently on my side ; but she had promised, and the performance of her promise was peremptorily claimed ; so with a heavy heart I left her. I never saw her again. There is surely such a thing as presentiment. A violent attack of gout in the stomach carried her off in a few hours. Hail to thy memory ! for thou wast of the antique world, when "service sweat for duty, not for meed !"

AUNT MARTHA.

ONE of the pleasantest habitations I have ever known is an old white house, built at right angles, with the pointed roofs and clustered chimneys of Elizabeth's day, covered with roses, vines, and passion-flowers, and parted by a green sloping meadow from a straggling picturesque village street. In this charming abode resides a more charming family: a gentleman,

"Polite as all his life in courts had been,
And good as he the world had never seen;"

two daughters full of sweetness and talent; and Aunt Martha—the most delightful of old maids! She has another appellation, I suppose,—she must have one;—but I scarcely know it; Aunt Martha is the name that belongs to her—the name of affection. Such is the universal feeling which she inspires, that all her friends, all her acquaintances, (in this case the terms are almost synonymous,) speak of her like her own family:—she is every body's Aunt Martha—and a very charming Aunt Martha she is.

First of all, she is, as all women should be if they can, remarkably handsome. She may be—it is a delicate matter to speak of a lady's age!—she must be five-and-forty; but few beauties of twenty could stand a comparison with her loveliness. It is such a fulness of bloom, so luxuriant, so satiating; just tall enough to carry off the plumpness which at forty-five is so becoming; a brilliant complexion; curled pouting lips; long, clear, bright grey eyes—the colour for expression, that which unites the quickness of the black with the softness of the blue; a Roman regularity of feature; and a profusion of rich brown hair.—Such is Aunt Martha. Add to this, a very gentle and pleasant speech, always kind, and generally lively;

the sweetest temper ; the easiest manners ; a singular rectitude and singleness of mind ; a perfect open-heartedness ; and a total unconsciousness of all these charms ; and you will wonder a little that she is Aunt Martha still. I have heard hints of an early engagement broken by the fickleness of man ;—and there is about her an aversion to love in one particular direction—the love matrimonial—and an overflowing of affection in all other channels, that it seems as if the natural course of the stream had been violently dammed up. She has many lovers—admirers I should say,—for there is, amidst her good-humoured gaiety, a coyness that forbids their going farther ; a modesty almost amounting to shyness, that checks even the laughing girls, who sometimes accuse her of stealing away their beaux. I do not think any man on earth could tempt her into wedlock ; it would be a most unpardonable monopoly if any one should ; an intolerable engrossing of a general blessing ; a theft from the whole community.

Her usual home is the white house covered with roses ; and her station in the family is rather doubtful. She is not the mistress, for her charming nieces are old enough to take and to adorn the head of the table ; nor the housekeeper, though, as she is the only lady of the establishment who wears pockets, those ensigns of authority, the keys, will sometimes be found, with other strays, in that goodly receptacle : nor a guest ; her spirit is too active for that lazy post ; her real vocation there, and every where, seems to be comforting, cheering, welcoming, and spoiling every thing that comes in her way ; and, above all, nursing and taking care. Of all kind employments, these are her favourites. Oh, the shawlings, the cloakings, the cloggings ! the cautions against cold, or heat, or rain, or sun ! the remedies for diseases not arrived ! colds uncaught ! incipient tooth-aches ! rheumatisms to come ! She loves nursing so well, that we used to accuse her of inventing maladies for other people, that she might have the pleasure of curing them ; and when they really come—as

come they will sometimes in spite of Aunt Martha—what a nurse she is! It is worth while to be a little sick to be so attended. All the cousins, and cousins' cousins of her connexion, as regularly send for her on the occasion of a lying-in, as for the midwife. I suppose she has undergone the ceremony of dandling the baby, sitting up with the new mamma, and dispensing the candle twenty times at least. She is equally important at weddings or funerals. Her humanity is inexhaustible. She has an intense feeling of fellowship with her kind, and grieves or rejoices in the sufferings or happiness of others with a reality as genuine as it is rare.

Her accomplishments are exactly of this sympathetic order; all calculated to administer much to the pleasure of her companions, and nothing to her own importance or vanity. She leaves to the sirens, her nieces, the higher enchantments of the piano, the harp, and the guitar, and that noblest of instruments, the human voice; ambitious of no other musical fame than such as belongs to the playing of quadrilles and waltzes for their little dances, in which she is indefatigable: she neither caricatures the face of man nor of nature under pretence of drawing figures or landscapes; but she ornaments the reticules, bell-ropes, ottomans, and chair-covers of all her acquaintance, with flowers as rich and luxuriant as her own beauty. She draws patterns for the ignorant, and works flounces, frills, and baby-linen for the idle; she reads aloud to the sick, plays at cards with the old, and loses at chess to the unhappy. Her gift in gossiping, too, is extraordinary; she is a gentle newsmonger, and turns her scandal on the sunny side. But she is an old maid still; and certain small peculiarities hang about her. She is a thorough hoarder; whatever fashion comes up, she is sure to have something of the sort by her—or, at least, something thereunto convertible. She is a little superstitious; sees strangers in her tea-cup, gifts in her finger-nails, letters and winding-sheets in the candle, and purses and coffins in the fire; would not spill the

salt "for all the worlds that one ever has to give;" and looks with dismay on a crossed knife and fork. Moreover, she is orderly to fidgetiness;—that is her greatest calamity!—for young ladies now-a-days are not quite so tidy as they should be,—and ladies' maids are much worse; and drawers are tumbled, and drawing-rooms in a litter. Happy she to whom a disarranged drawer can be a misery! Dear and happy Aunt Martha!

A PARTING GLANCE AT OUR VILLAGE.

It is now eighteen months since our village first sat for its picture, and I cannot say farewell to my courteous readers, without giving them some little intelligence of our goings on, a sort of parting glance at us and our condition. In outward appearance it hath, I suppose, undergone less alteration than any place of its inches in the kingdom. There it stands, the same long straggling street of pretty cottages, divided by pretty gardens, wholly unchanged in size or appearance, un-increased and undiminished by a single brick. To be sure, yesterday evening a slight misfortune happened to our goodly tenement, occasioned by the unlucky diligence mentioned in my first notice, which, under the conduct of a sleepy coachman, and a restive horse, contrived to knock down and demolish the wall of our court, and fairly to drive through the front garden, thereby destroying sundry curious stocks, carnations, and geraniums. It is a mercy that the unruly steed was content with battering the wall; for the message itself would come about our ears at the touch of a finger, and really there is one little end-parlour, an after-thought of the original builder, which stands so temptingly in the way, that I wonder the sagacious quadruped missed it. There was quite a

enough without that addition. The three insides (ladies) squalling from the interior of that commodious vehicle ; the outsides (gentlemen) swearing on the roof ; the coachman, still half asleep, but unconsciously blowing his horn ; we in the house screaming and scolding ; the passers-by shouting and hallooing ; and May, who little brooked such an invasion of her territories, barking in her tremendous lion-note, and putting down the other noises like a clap of thunder. But passengers, coachman, horses, and spectators, all righted at last ; and there is no harm done but to my flowers and to the wall. May, however, stands bewailing the ruins, for that low wall was her favourite haunt ; she used to parade backwards and forwards on the top of it, as if to show herself, just after the manner of a peacock on the top of a house ; and would sit or lie for hours on the corner next the gate, basking in the sunshine like a marble statue. Really she has quite the air of one who laments the destruction of personal property ; but the wall is to be rebuilt to-morrow, with old weather-stained bricks—no patch-work ! and exactly in the same form ; May herself will not find the difference ; so that in the way of alteration this little misfortune will pass for nothing. Neither have we any improvements worth calling such. Except that the wheeler's green door hath been retouched, out of the same pot (as I judge from the tint) with which he furbished up our new-old pony-chaise ; that the shop-window of our neighbour, the universal dealer, hath been beautified, and his name and calling splendidly set forth in yellow letters on a black ground ; and that our landlord of the Rose hath hoisted a new sign of unparalleled splendour ; one side consisting of a full-faced damask rose, of the size and hue of a piony, the other of a maiden blush in profile, which looks exactly like a carnation, so that both flowers are considerably indebted to the modesty of the "out-of-door artist," who has warily written The Rose under each :—except these trifling ornaments, which nothing but the jealous eye of a lover could detect, the dear place is altogether unchanged.

The only real improvement with which we have been visited for our sins—(I hate all innovation, whether for better or worse, as if I was a furious Tory, or a woman of threescore and ten)—the only misfortune of that sort which has befallen us, is under foot. The road has been adjusted on the plan of Mr. Mac-Adam ; and a tremendous operation it is. I do not know what good may ensue ; but for the last six months, some part or other of the highway has been impassable for any feet, except such as are shod by the blacksmith ; and even the four-footed people who wear iron shoes make wry faces, poor things ! at those stones, enemies to man and beast. However, the business is nearly done now ; we are covered with sharp flints every inch of us, except a “ bad step ” up the hill, which, indeed, looks like a bit cut out of the deserts of Arabia, fitter for camels and caravans than for Christian horses and coaches ; a point which, in spite of my dislike of alteration, I was forced to acknowledge to our surveyor, a portly gentleman, who, in a smart gig, drawn by a prancing steed, was kicking up a prodigious dust at that very moment. He and I ought to be great enemies ; for, besides the Mac-Adamite enormity of the stony road, he hath actually been guilty of tree-murder, having been accessory before the fact in the death of three limes along the rope-walk—dear sweet innocent limes, that did no harm on earth except shading the path ! I never should have forgiven that offence, had not their removal, by opening a beautiful view from the village up the hill, reconciled even my tree-loving eye to their abstraction. And, to say the truth, though we have had twenty little squabbles, there is no bearing malice with our surveyor ; he is so civil and good-humoured, has such a bustling and happy self-importance, such an honest earnestness in his vocation, (which is gratuitous by the bye,) and such an intense conviction that the state of the turnpike road between B. and K. is the principal affair of this life, that I would not undeceive him for the world. How often have I seen him on a cold winter morning, with a face all frost and business, great-coated up to the eyes, driving from post

to post, from one gang of labourers to another, praising, scolding, ordering, cheated, laughed at, and liked by them all ! Well, when once the hill is finished, we shall have done with him for ever, as he used to tell me by way of consolation, when I shook my head at him, as he went jolting along over his dear new roads, at the imminent risk of his springs and his bones ; we shall see no more of him ; for the Mac-Adam ways are warranted not to wear out. So be it ; I never wish to see a road-mender again.

But if the form of outward things be all unchanged around us, if the dwellings of man remain the same to the sight and the touch, the little world within hath undergone its usual mutations ;—the hive is the same, but of the bees some are dead and some are flown away, and some that we left insects in the shell, are already putting forth their young wings. Children in our village really sprout up like mushrooms ; the air is so promotive of growth, that the rogues spring into men and women, as if touched by Harlequin's wand, and are quite offended if one happens to say or do any thing which has a reference to their previous condition. My father grievously affronted Sally L., only yesterday, by bestowing upon her a great lump of gingerbread, with which he had stuffed his pockets at a fair. She immediately, as she said, gave it to the "children." Now Sally cannot be above twelve, to my certain knowledge, though taller than I am. Lizzy herself is growing womanly. I actually caught that little lady stuck on a chest of drawers, contemplating herself in the glass, and striving with all her might to gather the rich curls that hung about her neck, and turn them under a comb. Well ! If Sally and Lizzy live to be old maids, they may probably make the *amende honorable* to time, and wish to be thought young again. In the mean while, shall we walk up the street ?

The first cottage is that of Mr. H. the patriot, the illuminator, the independent and sturdy yet friendly member of our little state, who, stout and comely, with a handsome chaise-

cart, a strong mare, and a neat garden, might have passed for a portrait of that enviable class of Englishmen, who, after a youth of frugal industry, sit down in some retired place to "live upon their means." He and his wife seemed the happiest couple on earth: except a little too much leisure, I never suspected that they had one trouble or one care. But Cara, the witch, will come every where, even to that happiest station, and this prettiest place. She came in one of her most terrific forms—blindness—or (which is perhaps still more tremendous) the faint glimmering light and gradual darkness which precede the total eclipse. For a long time we had missed the pleasant bustling officiousness, the little services, the voluntary tasks which our good neighbour loved so well. Fruit-trees were blighted, and escaped his grand specific, fumigation; wasps multiplied, and their nests remained untraced; the cheerful modest knock with which, just at the very hour when he knew it could be spared, he presented himself to ask for the newspaper, was heard no more; he no longer hung over his gate to way-lay passengers, and entice them into chat; at last he even left off driving his little chaise; and was only seen moping up and down the garden-walk, or stealing gropingly from the wood-pile to the house. He evidently shunned conversation or questions, forbade his wife to tell what ailed him, and even when he put a green shade over his darkened eyes, fled from human sympathy with a stern pride that seemed almost ashamed of the humbling infirmity. That strange (but to a vigorous and healthy man perhaps natural) feeling soon softened. The disease increased hourly, and he became dependent on his excellent wife for every comfort and relief. She had many willing assistants in her labour of love; all his neighbours strove to return, according to their several means, the kindness which all had received from him in some shape or other. The country boys, to whose service he had devoted so much time, in shaping bats, constructing bows and arrows, and other quips and

trickeries of the same nature, vied with each other in performing little offices about the yard and stable; and John Evans, the half-witted gardener, to whom he had been a constant friend, repaid his goodness by the most unwearied attention. Gratitude even seemed to sharpen poor John's perception and faculties. There is an old man in our parish workhouse who occasionally walks through the street, led by a little boy holding the end of a long stick. The idea of this man, who had lived in utter blindness for thirty years, was always singularly distressing to Mr. H. I shall never forget the address with which our simple gardener used to try to divert his attention from this miserable fellow-sufferer. He would get between them to prevent the possibility of recognition by the dim and uncertain vision; would talk loudly to drown the peculiar noise, the sort of duet of feet, caused by the quick short steps of the child, and the slow irregular tread of the old man; and, if any one ventured to allude to blind Robert, he would turn the conversation with an adroitness and acuteness which might put to shame the proudest intellect. So passed many months. At last Mr. H. was persuaded to consult a celebrated oculist, and the result was most comforting. The disease was ascertained to be a cataract; and now with the increase of darkness came an increase of hope. The film spread, thickened, ripened, speedily and healthily; and to-day the requisite operation has been performed with equal skill and success. You may still see some of the country boys lingering round the gate with looks of strong and wondering interest; poor John is going to and fro, he knows not for what, unable to rest a moment; Mrs. H., too, is walking in the garden, shedding tears of thankfulness; and he who came to support their spirit, the stout strong-hearted farmer A., seems trembling and overcome. The most tranquil person in the house is probably the patient: he bore the operation with resolute firmness, and *he has seen again*. Think of the bliss bound up in those four words! He is in darkness now, and must re-

main so for some weeks ; but he has seen, and he will see ; and that humble cottage is again a happy dwelling.

Next we come to the shoemaker's abode. All is unchanged there, except that its master becomes more industrious and more pale-faced, and that his fair daughter is a notable exemplification of the development which I have already noticed amongst our young things. But she is in the real transition state, just emerging from the chrysalis, and the eighteen months, between fourteen and a half and sixteen, would metamorphose a child into a woman all the world over. She is still pretty, but not so elegant as when she wore frocks and pin-a-fores, and unconsciously classical, parted her long brown locks in the middle of her forehead, and twisted them up in a knot behind, giving to her finely shaped head and throat the air of a Grecian statue. Then she was stirring all day in her small housewifery, or her busy idleness, delving and digging in her flower-border, tossing and dandling every infant that came within her reach, feeding pigs and poultry, playing with May, and prattling with an open-hearted frankness to the country lads, who assemble at evening in the shop to enjoy a little gentle gossiping ; for be it known to my London readers, that the shoemaker's in a country village is now what (according to tradition, and the old novels) the barber's used to be, the resort of all the male newsmongers, especially the young. Then she talked to these visitors gaily and openly, sang, and laughed, and ran in and out, and took no more thought of a young man than of a gosling. Then she was only fourteen. Now she wears gowns and aprons,—puts her hair in paper,—has left off singing, talks,—has left off running, walks,—nurses the infants with a grave solemn grace,—has entirely out her former playmate, Mayflower, who tosses her pretty head as much as to say—who cares?—and has nearly renounced all acquaintance with the visitors of the shop, who are by no means disposed to take matters so quietly. There she stands on the threshold, shy and demure, just vouchsafing

a formal nod or a faint smile as they pass, and, if she in her turn be compelled to pass the open door of their news-room, (for the working apartment is separate from the house,) edging along as slyly and mincingly as if there were no such beings as young men in the world. Exquisite coquette! I think (she is my opposite neighbour, and I have a right to watch her doings,—the right of retaliation) there is one youth particularly distinguished by her non-notice, one whom she never will see nor speak to, who stands a very fair chance to carry her off. He is called Jem Tanner, and is a fine lad, with an open ruddy countenance, a clear blue eye, and curling hair of that tint which the poets are pleased to denominate golden. Though not one of our eleven, he was a promising cricketer. We have missed him lately on the green at the Sunday evening game, and I find on inquiry that he now frequents a chapel about a mile off, where he is the best male-singer, as our nymph of the shoe-shop is incomparably the first female. I am not fond of betting; but I would venture the lowest stake of gentility, a silver three-pence, that, before the winter ends, a wedding will be the result of these weekly meetings at the chapel. In the long dark evenings, when the father has enough to do in piloting the mother with conjugal gallantry through the dirty lanes, think of the opportunity that Jem will have to escort the daughter. A little difficulty he may have to encounter: the lass will be coy for a while; the mother will talk of their youth, the father of their finances; but the marriage, I doubt not, will ensue.

Next in order, on the other side of the street, is the blacksmith's house. Change has been busy here in a different and more awful form. Our sometime constable, the tipsiest of parish officers, of blacksmiths, and of men, is dead. Returning from a revel with a companion as full of beer as himself, one or the other, or both, contrived to overset the cart in a ditch; (the living scapegrace is pleased to lay the blame of the mishap on the horse, but that is contrary to all probability, this

respectable quadruped being a water-drinker;) and inward bruises, acting on inflamed blood and an impaired constitution, carried him off in a very short time, leaving an ailing wife and eight children, the eldest of whom is only fourteen years of age. This sounds like a very tragical story; yet, perhaps, because the loss of a drunken husband is not quite so great a calamity as the loss of a sober one, the effect of this event is not altogether so melancholy as might be expected. The widow, when she was a wife, had a complaining broken-spirited air, a peevish manner, a whining voice, a dismal countenance, and a person so neglected and slovenly, that it was difficult to believe that she had once been remarkably handsome. She is now quite another woman. The very first Sunday she put on her weeds, we all observed how tidy and comfortable she looked, how much her countenance, in spite of a decent show of tears, was improved, and how completely through all her sighings her tone had lost its peevishness. I have never seen her out of spirits or out of humour since. She talks and laughs and bustles about, managing her journeymen and scolding her children as notably as any dame in the parish. The very house looks more cheerful; she has cut down the old willow trees that stood in the court, and let in the light; and now the sun glances brightly from the casement windows, and plays amidst the vine-leaves and the clusters of grapes which cover the walls; the door is newly painted, and shines like the face of its mistress; even the forge has lost half its dinginess. Every thing smiles. She indeed talks by fits of "poor George," especially when any allusion to her old enemy, mine host of the Rose, brings the deceased to her memory: then she bewails (as is proper) her dear husband and her desolate condition; calls herself a lone widow; sighs over her eight children; complains of the troubles of business, and tries to persuade herself and others that she is as wretched as a good wife ought to be. But this will not do. She is a happier woman than she has been any time these fifteen years,

and she knows it. My dear village husbands, if you have a mind that your wives should be really sorry when you die, whether by a fall from a cart or otherwise, keep from the ale-house !

Next comes the tall thin red house, that ought to boast genteeler inmates than its short fat mistress, its children, its pigs, and its quantity of noise, happiness, and vulgarity. The din is greater than ever. The husband, a merry jolly tar, with a voice that sounds as if issuing from a speaking trumpet, is returned from a voyage to India ; and another little one, a chubby roaring boy, has added his lusty cries to the family concert.

This door, blockaded by huge bales of goods, and half darkened by that moving mountain, the tilted waggon of the S. mill, which stands before it, belongs to the village shop. Increase has been here too in every shape. Within fourteen months two little pretty quiet girls have come into the world. Before Fanny could well manage to totter across the road to her good friend the nymph of the shoe-shop, Margaret made her appearance ; and poor Fanny, discarded at once from the maid's arms and her mother's knee, degraded from the rank and privileges of "the baby," (for at that age precedence is strangely reversed,) would have had a premature foretaste of the instability of human felicity, had she not taken refuge with that best of nurses, a fond father. Every thing thrives about the shop, from the rosy children to the neat maid and the smart apprentice. No room now for lodgers, and no need ! The young mantua-making school-mistresses, the old inmates, are gone ; one of them not very far. She grew tired of scolding little boys and girls about their A, B, C, and of being scolded in her turn by their sisters and mothers about pelisses and gowns ; so she gave up both trades almost a year ago, and has been ever since our pretty Harriet. I do not think she has ever repented of the exchange, though it might not perhaps have been made so soon, had not her elder sister, who had been

long engaged to an attendant at one of the colleges of Oxford, thought herself on the point of marriage just as our housemaid left us. Poor Betsy! She had shared the fate of many a prouder maiden, wearing out her youth in expectation of the promotion that was to authorize her union with the man of her heart. Many a year had she waited in smiling constancy, fond of William in no common measure, and proud of him, as well she might be; for, when the vacation so far lessened his duties as to render a short absence practicable, and he stole up here for a few days to enjoy her company, it was difficult to distinguish him in air and manner, as he sauntered about in elegant indolence with his fishing rod and his flute, from the young Oxonians his masters. At last promotion came; and Betsy, apprized of it by an affectionate and congratulatory letter from his sister, prepared her wedding-clothes, and looked hourly for the bridegroom. No bridegroom came. A second letter announced, with regret and indignation, that William had made another choice, and was to be married early in the ensuing month. Poor Betsy! We were alarmed for her health, almost for her life. She wept incessantly, took no food, wandered recklessly about from morning till night, lost her natural rest, her flesh, her colour; and in less than a week she was so altered, that no one would have known her. Consolation and remonstrance were alike rejected, till at last Harriet happened to strike the right chord by telling her that "she wondered at her want of spirit." This was touching her on the point of honour; she had always been remarkably high-spirited, and could as little brook the imputation as a soldier or a gentleman. This lucky suggestion gave an immediate turn to her feelings; anger and scorn succeeded to grief; she wiped her eyes, "hemmed away a sigh," and began to scold most manfully. She did still better. She recalled an old admirer, who, in spite of repeated rejections, had remained constant in his attachment, and made such good speed, that she was actually married the day before

her faithless lover, and is now the happy wife of a very respectable tradesman.

Ah ! the in-and-out cottage ! the dear, dear home ! No weddings there ! No changes ! except that the white kitten, who sits purring at the window under the great myrtle, has succeeded to his lamented grandfather, our beautiful Persian cat, I cannot find one alteration to talk about. The wall of the court indeed—but that will be mended to-morrow.

Here is the new sign, the well-frequented Rose inn ! Plenty of changes there ! Our landlord is always improving, if it be only a pig-sty or a watering trough—plenty of changes and one splendid wedding. Miss Phœbe is married, not to her old lover the recruiting serjeant, (for he had one wife already, probably more,) but to a patten-maker, as arrant a dandy as ever wore mustachios. How Phœbe could “abase her eyes” from the stately serjeant to this youth, half a foot shorter than herself, whose “waist would go into any alderman’s thumb-ring,” might, if the final choice of a coquette had ever been matter of wonder, have occasioned some speculation. But our patten-maker is a man of spirit ; and the wedding was of extraordinary splendour. Three gigs, each containing four persons, graced the procession, besides numerous carts and innumerable pedestrians. The bride was equipped in muslin and satin, and really looked very pretty with her black sparkling eyes, her clear brown complexion, her blushes and her smiles ; the bride-maidens were only less smart than the bride ; and the bridegroom was “point device in his accoutrements,” and as munificent as a nabob. Cake flew about the village ; plum-puddings were abundant ; and strong beer, ay, even mine host’s best double X, was profusely distributed. There was all manner of eating and drinking, with singing, fiddling, and dancing between ; and in the evening, to crown all, there was Mr. Moon, the conjuror. Think of that stroke of good fortune !—Mr. Moon, the very pearl of all conjurors, who had the honour of puzzling and delighting their late Majesties with his

“wonderful and pleasing exhibition of Thaumaturgies, Tachygraphy, mathematical operations, and magical deceptions,” happened to arrive about an hour before dinner, and commenced his ingenious deceptions very unimportantly at our house. Calling to apply for permission to perform in the village, being equipped in a gay scarlet coat, and having something smart and sportsman-like in his appearance, he was announced by Harriet as one of the gentlemen of the C. hunt, and taken (*mistaken* I should have said) by the whole family for a certain captain newly arrived in the neighbourhood. That misunderstanding, which must, I think, have retaliated on Mr. Moon a little of the puzzlement that he inflicts on others, vanished of course at the production of his bill of fare ; and the requested permission was instantly given. Never could he have arrived in a happier hour ! Never were spectators more gratified or more scared. All the tricks prospered. The cock crew after his head was cut off ; and half-crowns and sovereigns flew about as if winged ; the very wedding-ring could not escape Mr. Moon’s incantations. We heard of nothing else for a week. From the bridegroom, *un esprit fort*, who defied all manner of conjuration and *diablerie*, down to my Lizzy, whose boundless faith swallows the Arabian Tales, all believed and trembled. So thoroughly were men, women, and children impressed with the idea of the worthy conjuror’s dealings with the devil, that when he had occasion to go to B., not a soul would give him a cast, from pure awe ; and if it had not been for our pony-chaise, poor Mr. Moon must have walked. I hope he is really a prophet ; for he foretold all happiness to the new-married pair.

So this pretty white house with the lime-trees before it, which has been under repair for these three years, is on the point of being finished. The vicar has taken it, as the vicarage-house is not yet fit for his reception. He has sent before him a neat modest maid-servant, whose respectable appearance gives a character to her master and mistress,—a hamper full

of flower-roots, sundry boxes of books, a piano-forte, and some simple and useful furniture. Well, we shall certainly have neighbours, and I have a presentiment that we shall find friends.

Lizzy, you may now come along with me round the corner and up the lane, just to the end of the wheeler's shop, and then we shall go home ; it is high time. What is this *affiche* in the parlour window ? " Apartments to let—inquire within." These are certainly the curate's lodgings—is he going away ? Oh, I suppose the new vicar will do his own duty—yet, however well he may do it, rich and poor will regret the departure of Mr. B. Well, I hope that he may soon get a good living. " Lodgings to let"—who ever thought of seeing such a placard hereabout ? The lodgings, indeed, are very convenient for " a single gentleman, a man and his wife, or two sisters," as the newspapers say—comfortable apartments, neat and tasty withal, and the civilest of all civil treatment from the host and hostess. But who would ever have dreamt of such a notice ? Lodgings to let in our village !

A WALK THROUGH THE VILLAGE.

WHEN I had the honour about two years ago of presenting our little village to that multiform and most courteous personage the Public, I hinted I think that it had a trick of standing still, of remaining stationary, unchanged and unimproved in this most changeable and improving world. This habit, whether good or evil, it has retained so pertinaciously, that except that it is two years older, I cannot point out a single alteration which has occurred in our street. I was on the point of paying the inhabitants the same equivocal compliment—and really I almost may—for setting aside the

inevitable growth of the younger members of our community, and a few more grey hairs and wrinkles amongst the elder, I see little change. We are the same people, the same generation, neither richer, nor wiser, nor better, nor worse. Some, to be sure, have migrated; and one or two have died; and some——But we had better step out into the village and look about us.

It is a pleasant lively scene this May morning, with the sun shining so gaily on the irregular rustic dwellings, intermixed with their pretty gardens; a cart and a waggon watering (it would be more correct, perhaps, to say *beering*) at the Rose; Dame Wheeler, with her basket and her brown loaf, just coming from the bake-house; the nymph of the shoe-shop feeding a large family of goslings at the open door—they are very late this year, those noisy little geese; two or three women in high gossip dawdling up the street; Charles North the gardener, with his blue apron and a ladder on his shoulder, walking rapidly by; a cow and a donkey browsing the grass by the way-side; my white greyhound, *Mayflower*, sitting majestically in front of her own stable; and ducks, chickens, pigs, and children, scattered over all.

A pretty scene! rather more lopping of trees, indeed, and clipping of hedges, along the high road, than one quite admires; but then that identical turnpike-road, my ancient despair, is now so perfect and so beautiful a specimen of *Macadamization*, that one even learns to like tree-logging and hedge-clipping for the sake of such smooth ways. It is simply the best road in England, so says our surveyor, and so say I. The three miles between us and B—— are like a bowling-green. By the way I ought perhaps to mention, as something like change in our outward position, that this little hamlet of ours is much nearer to that illustrious and worshipful town than it used to be. Not that our quiet street hath been guilty of the unbecoming friskiness of skipping from place to place, but that our ancient neighbour, whose suburbs are sprouting

forth in all directions, hath made a particularly strong shoot towards us, and threatens some day or other to pay us a visit bodily. The good town has already pushed the turnpike-gate half a mile nearer to us, and is in a fair way to overleap that boundary and build on, till the buildings join ours, as London has done by Hampstead or Kensington. What a strange figure our rude and rustical habitations would cut ranged by the side of some staring red row of newly-erected houses, each as like the other as two drops of water, with courts before and behind, a row of poplars opposite, and a fine new name ! How different we should look in our countless variety of nooks and angles, our gardens, and arbours, and lime trees, and pond ! But this union of town and country will hardly happen in my time, let B—— enlarge as it may. We shall certainly lend no assistance, for our boundaries still continue exactly the same.

The first cottage—Ah ! here is the post-cart coming up the road at its most respectable rumble, that cart, or rather caravan, which so much resembles a house upon wheels, or a show of the smaller kind at a country fair. It is now crammed full of passengers, the driver just protruding his head and hands out of the vehicle, and the sharp clever boy, who in the occasional absence of his father officiates as deputy, perched like a monkey on the roof. “Any letters to-day ?” And that question, always so interesting, being unsatisfactorily answered, I am at leisure to return to our survey. The first cottage is that erst inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. H., the retired publican and his good wife. They are gone ; I always thought we were too quiet for them ; and his eyes being quite recovered, he felt the weariness of idleness more than ever. So they returned to W., where he has taken a comfortable lodging next door to their old and well-frequented inn, the Pie and Parrot, where he has the pleasure every evening of reading the newspaper and abusing the ministers amongst his old customers, himself a customer ; as well as of lending his will-

ing aid in waiting and entertaining on fair-days and market-days, at pink-feasts and melon-feasts, to the great solace of mine host, and the no small perplexity of the guests, who, puzzled between the old landlord and the new, hardly know to whom to pay their reckoning, or which to call to account for a bad-tap :—a mistake which our sometime neighbour, happier than he has been since he left the *Bar*, particularly enjoys. His successor here is an industrious person, 'by calling a seedsman, as may be collected by the heaps of pea and bean seed, clover and vetches, piled tier above tier against the window.

The little white cottage down the lane, which stands so prettily, backed by a tall elm wood, has also lost its fair inmate, Sally Wheeler : who finding that Joel continued constant to our pretty Harriet, and was quite out of hope, was suddenly forsaken by the fit of dutifulness which brought her to keep her deaf grandmother company, and returned to service. Dame Wheeler has however a companion, in a widow of her own standing, appointed by the parish to live with, and take care of her. A nice tidy old woman is Dame Shearman ;—pity that she looks so frumpish ;—her face seems fixed in one perpetual scold. It was not so when she lived with her sister on the Lea, then she was a light-hearted merry chatterer, whose tongue ran all day long—and that's the reason of her cross look now ! Mrs. Wheeler is as deaf as a post, and poor Mrs. Shearman is pining of a suppression of speech. Fancy what it is for a woman, especially a talking woman, to live without a listener ! forced either to hold her peace, or when that becomes impossible, to talk to one to whose sense words are as air ! La Trappe is nothing to this tantalization ;—besides the Trappists were men. No wonder that poor Dame Shearman looks cross.

The Blacksmith's !—no change in that quarter ; except a most astonishing growth amongst the children : George looks quite a man, and Betsy, who was just like a blue-eyed doll, with her flaxen curls and her apple-blossom complexion, the

prettiest fairy that ever was seen, now walks up to school every morning with her work-bag and her spelling-book, and is really a great girl. They are a fine family from the eldest to the youngest.

The Shoemaker's!—not much to talk of there; no funeral!—and (which disappoints my prediction) no wedding! My pretty neighbour has not yet made her choice. She does wisely to look about her. A belle and an heiress—I dare say she'll have a hundred pounds to her portion—and still in her teens, has some right to be nice. Besides, what would all the mammas, whose babies she nurses, and all the children whom she spoils, do without her? No sparing the Shoemaker's fair daughter! She must not marry yet these half-dozen years!

The shop!—all prosperous, tranquil, and thriving; another little one coming; an idle apprentice run away—more of him anon; and a civil journeyman hired in his room. An excellent exchange! Jesse is a very agreeable person. He is the politician of the village since we have lost Mr. H., and as he goes every day into B—— in his paper cap to carry our country bread, he is sure to bring home the latest intelligence of all sorts, especially of canvassing and electioneering. Jesse has the most complete collection of squibs in the country, and piques himself on his skill in detecting the writers. He will bestow as many guesses, and bring forward as many proofs, on occasion of a hand-bill signed "Fair-Play," or a song subscribed "True-Blue," as ever were given to that abiding riddle, the authorship of Junius—and very likely come as near the mark.

Ah, the dear home! A runaway there too! I may as well tell the story now, although very sorry to have to record so sad an act of delinquency of my clients the boys, as an elopement from our own premises.

Henry Hamilton—that ever a parish boy, offspring of a tailor and a cook-maid, should have an appellation so fitted to the hero of a romance! Henry Hamilton had lived with us

for three years and upwards as man of all work, part waterer of my geraniums, sole feeder of May, the general favourite and factotum of the family. Being an orphan with no home but the workhouse, no friend but the overseer, at whose recommendation he was engaged, he seemed to belong to us in an especial manner, to have a more than common claim on protection and kindness. Henry was just the boy to discover and improve this feeling ;—quick, clever, capable, subtle, and supple ; exceedingly agreeable in manner, and pleasant in appearance. He had a light, pliant form, with graceful delicate limbs like a native Indian ; a dark but elegant countenance sparkling with expression ; and a remarkable variety and versatility of talent. Nothing came amiss to him. In one week he hath been carpenter, blacksmith, painter, tinker, glazier, tailor, cobbler, and wheelwright. These were but a few of his multifarious accomplishments ; he would beat Harriet at needle-work, and me in gardening. All the parish was in the habit of applying to him on emergency, and I never knew him decline a job in my life. He hath mended a straw bonnet and a smoke-jack, cleaned a clock, constructed a donkey-cart, and dressed a doll.

With all these endowments, Henry was scarcely so good a servant as a duller boy. Besides that he undertook so many things that full half of them were of necessity left unfinished, he was generally to seek when wanted, and after sending a hue and cry round the neighbourhood, would be discovered at the blacksmith's or the collar-maker's, intently occupied on some devices of his own. Then he had been praised for invention, till he thought it necessary to display that brilliant quality on all occasions, by which means we, who are exceedingly simple, old-fashioned, matter-of-fact people, were constantly posed by new-fangled novelties, which nobody but the artist could use, or quips and quiddities of no use whatever. Thus we had fastenings for boxes that would not open, and latches for gates that refused to shut, bellows of a new con-

struction that no mortal could blow, and traps that caught fingers instead of rats; May was nearly choked by an improved slip, and my white Camellia killed outright by an infallible wash for insects.

Notwithstanding these mishaps, we all liked Henry: his master liked his sportsmanship, his skill and boldness in riding, and the zeal with which he would maintain the honour of his own dogs right or wrong; his mistress liked his civility and good humour; Harriet felt the value of his alert assistance; and I had a real respect for his resource. In the village he was less a favourite; he looked down upon the other boys, and the men, although amused by his cleverness, looked down upon him.

At last he unfortunately met with a friend of his own age in a clever apprentice, who arrived at our neighbour the baker's from the good town of B——. This youngster, "for shortness called" Bill, was a thorough town boy,—you might see at a glance that he had been bred in the streets. He was a bold sturdy lad, with a look compounded of great impudence and a little slyness, and manners, although characterized by the former of these amiable qualities. His voice was a shout, his walk a swagger, and his knock at the door a bounce that threatened to bring the house about our ears. The very first time that I saw him, he was standing before our court with a switch in his hand, with which he was alternately menacing May, who, nothing daunted, returned his attack by an incessant bark, and demolishing a superb crown imperial. Never was a more complete *mauvais sujet*.

This audacious urchin most unfortunately took a great fancy to Henry, which Henry, caught by the dashing assurance of his manner, most unluckily returned. They became friends after the fashion of Orestes and Pylades, or Damon and Pythias, fought for each other, lied for each other, and, finally, ran away with each other. The reason for Bill's evasion was manifest, his conduct having been such that his master had

been compelled to threaten him with Bridewell and the treadmill ; but why Henry, who, although his invention had latterly taken a decided bent towards that branch of ingenuity called mischief, might still have walked quietly out of the street door with a good character in his pocket, should choose to elope from the garret window, is best known to himself. Off they set upward—that is to say, Londonward, the common destination of your country youths who sally forth to try their fortune. Forth they set, and in about a week they were followed by a third runaway, a quiet, simple, modest-looking lad, a sort of hanger-on to the other two, and an apprentice to our worthy neighbour the carpenter. Poor Ned ! we were sorry for him ; he was of some promise as a cricketer—(by the way, Bill never went near the ground, which I always thought a bad sign ;)—Ned would really have made a good cricketer, not a brilliant hitter, but an excellent stopper of the ball ; one of your safe steady players, whom there is no putting out. Nobody ever dreamt of his running away. We all knew that he was a little idle, and that he was a sort of follower of Bill's—But Ned to decamp ! He must have gone out of pure imitation, just as geese waddle into a pond in single file, or as one sheep or pig will follow another through a gap in the hedge ;—sheer imitation ! A notable example of the harm that one town-bred youth will work in a country village ! Go he did, and back he is come, poor fellow ! thin as a herring, and ragged as a colt, a mere moral to tag a tale withal. He has not had a day's work since he left his good master, nor, to judge from his looks, a sufficient meal. His account of the other two worthies is just what I expected. Henry, after many ups and downs, (during one of which he was within half an inch of being a soldier, that is to say, he *did* enlist, and wanted only that much of the standard,) is now in a good place, and likely to do well. His *fidus Achates*, Bill, has disappeared from London as he did from the country. No one knows what has become of him. For my own part I

never looked for any good from a lad, who, to say nothing of his graver iniquities, kept away from the cricket ground, thrashed my flowers, and tried to thrash May.

The flourishing and well-accustomed Rose Inn has lost its comely mistress, a harmless, blameless, kindly-tempered woman, with a pleasant smile, and a gentle voice, who withered suddenly in the very strength and pride of womanhood, and died lamented by high and low. She is succeeded in the management of that respectable hostelry by two light-footed and light-hearted lasses of twelve and thirteen, who skip about after their good bustling father with an officious civility that the guests find irresistible, and conduct the housekeeping with a fragility and forethought beyond their years.

The white house, with the limes in front, has also lost, though not by death, our good vicar and his charming family. They have taken possession of their own pretty dwelling; and their removal has given me an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with all the crooks and turnings, the gates, ponds, and pollards, of the vicarage lane;—a walk which, on that event, I suddenly discovered to be one of the prettiest in the neighbourhood.

Ah! here is Lizzy, half leaning, half riding, on the gate of her own court, looking very demure, and yet quite ripe for a frolic. Lizzy has in some measure outgrown her beauty; which desirable possession does very often run away from a young lady at six years old, and come back again at twelve. I think that such will be the case here. She is still a very nice little girl, quick, clever, active, and useful; goes to school; cooks upon occasion her father's dinner; and is beyond all comparison the handiest little waiting woman in the parish. She is waiting now to speak to her playmate and companion the wheelwright's daughter, who with all her mother's attentive politeness is running down the street with an umbrella and her clogs, to fence their lodger, Mrs. Hay, from the ill effects of a summer shower. I think that we have had about

a dozen drops of rain, and where they came from no mortal can guess, for there is not a cloud in the sky ; but there goes little Mary with a grave civility, a curtsying earnestness, that would be quite amusing in so young a child, if the feeling that dictated the attention were not so good and so real, and the object so respectable.

Mrs. Hay is a widow, a slight, delicate, elderly person, in a well-preserved black silk gown, a neat quiet bonnet never in fashion, nor ever wholly out, snow-white stockings, and a handsome grey shawl—her invariable walking costume. She makes no visits ; cultivates no acquaintance ; and seldom leaves her neat quiet room except to glide into church on a Sunday, and to take a short walk on some fine spring morning. No one knows precisely what Mrs. Hay's station has been, but every body feels that she is an object of interest and respect.

Now up the hill ! past the white cottage of the little mason, whiter than ever, for it has just been beautified ; past the darker but still prettier dwelling of the lieutenant, mantled with sweet-brier and honeysuckles, and fruit trees of all sorts ; one turn to look at the landscape so glowingly bright and green, with its affluence of wood dappled with villages, and gentlemen's seats, the wide spreading town of B—— lying in the distance with its spires and towers, the Thames and the Kennet winding along their lines of light like glittering serpents, and the O—— hills rising beyond ;—one glance at that glorious prospect, and here we are at the top of the hill, on the open common, where the air is so fresh and pure, and the sun shines so gaily on the golden furze.

Did I say that there were no alterations in our Village ? Could I so utterly forget the great doings on the top of the hill, where by dint of whitening, and sash-windowing, and fresh-dooring, the old ample farm-house has become a very genteel-looking residence ? Or the cottage on the common opposite, or rather the two cottages, which have, by a similar transmogrification,

been laid into one, and now form, with their new cart-shed, their double garden, and their neat paling, so pretty and comfortable a home for the respectable mistress of the little Village School and her industrious husband? How could I forget that cottage, whose inhabitants I see so often and like so well?

Mr. Moore is the greatest market-gardener in the parish; and leads his donkey chaise through the street every summer afternoon, vending fruit and vegetables, and followed by a train of urchins of either sex. Some who walk boldly up to the cart, halfpenny customers, who ask questions and change their minds, balance between the merits of cherries and gooseberries, and gravely calculate under what form of fruit they may get most eating for their money.* These are the rich. Others, the shy, who stand aloof, are penniless elves, silent petitioners, who wait about with longing looks, till some child-loving purchaser, or Mr. Moore himself, unable to withstand those pleading eyes, flings them a dole, and gives them the double delight of the fruit and the scramble.

The dear cricket ground! Even at this hour there are boys loitering about that beloved scene of evening pastime, not quite playing, but idling and lounging, and looking as if they longed to play. My friend the little Hussar, with his blue jacket and his immovable gravity, is the quietest of the party, and Ben Kirby, youngest brother of Joe, (I think I have spoken of Ben before,) by far the noisiest. Joe no longer belongs to the boys' side, having been promoted to play with the men; and Ben has succeeded to his post as chief and leader of the

* It is amusing to see how very early poor children become acquainted with the rate of exchange between the smaller denominations of coin and the commodities—such as cakes, nuts, and gingerbread—which they purchase. No better judge of the currency question than a country brat of three years old. Lizzy, before she could speak plain, was so knowing in cakes and halfpence, that it was a common amusement with the people at the shop where she dealt to try to cheat her, and watch her excessive anger when she detected the imposition. She was sure to find them out, and was never pacified till she had all that was due to her.

youngsters. Joe is a sort of person to make himself happy any where, but I suspect that he has not at present gained much pleasure by the exchange. It is always a very equivocal advantage when a person is removed from the first place in one class, to the lowest in the rank just above ; and in the present instance poor Joe seems to me to have gained little by his preferment, except the honour of being Fag general to the whole party. His feelings must be something like those of a provincial actor transplanted to the London boards, who finds himself on the scene of his ambition indeed, but playing Richmond instead of Richard, Macduff instead of Macbeth. Joe, however, will doubtless work his way up, and in the mean time Ben fills his abdicated throne with eminent ability.

Jem Eusden, his quondam rival, is lost to the cricket ground altogether. He is gone forth to see the world. An uncle of his mother's, a broker by profession, resident in Shoe-Lane, came into this neighbourhood to attend a great auction, and was so caught by Jem's scholarship, that he carried him off to London and placed him with a hosier in Cheapside, where he is to this hour engaged in tying up gloves and stockings, and carrying out parcels. His grand-uncle describes him as much improved by the removal : and his own letters to Ben (for since they have been parted they are become great friends) confirm the assertion. He writes by every opportunity, full as often, I should think, as once a quarter : and his letters give by far the best accounts of the Lord Mayor's day, as well as of the dwarfs, giants, and other monsters on show in London, of any that arrive in these parts. He is critical on the Christmas Pantomimes, descriptive on the Panoramas, and his narrative on the death of the elephant (whose remains his good kinsman the broker took him to visit) was so pathetic that it made the whole village cry. All the common is in admiration of Jem's genius, always excepting his friend Ben Kirby, who laughs at every thing, even his correspondent's letters, and hath been heard to insinuate that the most elo-

quent morceaux are "bits out of newspapers." Ben is a shrewd wag and a knowing; but in this instance I think that he is mistaken. I hold Jem's flights for original, and suspect that the young gentleman will turn out literary.

THE TENANTS OF BEECHGROVE.

THOSE who live in a thickly inhabited and a very pretty country, close to a large town, within a morning's ride of London, and an easy distance from Bath, to Cheltenham, and the sea, must lay their account, (especially if there be also excellent roads, and a capital pack of fox-hounds,) on some of the evils which are generally found to counterbalance so many conveniences; such as a most unusual dearness and scarcity of milk, cream, butter, eggs, and poultry—luxuries held proper to rural life,—a general corruption of domestics,—and, above all, a perpetual change and fluctuation of neighbours. The people of the higher class in this neighbourhood are as mutable as the six-months denizens of Richmond, or Hampstead—mere birds of passage, who "come like shadows, so depart." If a resident of ten years ago were, by any chance, to come here now, he would be in great luck if he found three faces of gentility that he could recognise. I do not mean to insinuate that faces in our parts wax old or ugly sooner than elsewhere; but, simply, that they do not stay amongst us long enough to become old—that one after another, they vanish. All our mansions are let, or to be let. The old manorial Hall, where squire succeeded to squire from generation to generation, is cut down into a villa, or a hunting-lodge, and transferred season after season from tenant to tenant, with as little remorse as if it were a lodging-house at Brighton. The lords of the soil are almost as universally absentees as if our fair

country were part and parcel of the Sister Kingdom. The spirit of migration possesses the land. Nobody of any note ever talks of staying amongst us, that I have heard—except a speculating candidate for the next borough ; and he is said to have given pretty intelligible hints, that he shall certainly be off, unless he be elected. In short, we H——shire people are a generation of runaways.

As “out of evil cometh good,” one pleasant consequence of this incessant mutation has been the absence of that sort of prying and observation of which country neighbours used to be accused. No street even in London was freer from small gossiping. With us, they who were moving, or thinking of moving, had something else to do : and we, the few dull laggards, who remained fixed in our places, as stationary as directing posts, and pretty nearly as useless, were too much accustomed to the whirl, to take any great note of the passers by.

Yet, even amidst the general flitting, one abode gradually forced itself into notice, for the unrivalled rapidity of succession with which tenant followed tenant,—the most admired and the most changeable of all. It was an exceedingly pretty inconvenient cottage,—a picture of a place, with its French windows and verandahs, its trellis and porch covered with clematis and jessamine, its baby-house conservatory, and its miniature lawn. It was situated in the midst of woody, winding lanes, lost as it were in the labyrinths of our rich and intricate country ; with an open grove of noble beeches on one side of it, and a clear stream, crossed by a winding bridge, on the other.

In short, Beechgrove, with all its pretty rusticities, its violets and primroses, and nightingales, and turtle doves, was the very place in which to spend the honeymoon. It seemed a spot made expressly for brides and bridegrooms, doomed, by the inexorable laws of fashion, to four weeks of connubial felicity, to get creditably weary of solitude and of each other.

Accordingly, couple after couple repaired to Beechgrove.

The very postillions, whether from south or north, east or west, knew instinctively where to deposit a new-married pair. There was not so pretty a dove-cote within twenty miles. Here they came in quick succession, and we had great amusement in watching them. A bridal party is generally very pleasant to look at,—all white satin, and white lace, and white favours, and finery and gaiety ! one likes every thing about it : the horses so sleek and prancing ; the carriages so ostentatiously new and grand ; the servants so full of conscious importance, parading and bustling, as proud of their master's splendour, as if they belonged to a Sheriff on Lord Mayor's day, or to a winning candidate at an election time ! Well ! they came, and they went,—the fashionable, the titled, the wealthy, and the plain, glad, as it seemed, to come, and certainly glad to go. One couple only remained a little beyond the allotted time. (N. B. that bride was remarkably pretty.) They lingered on ; she was charmed with Beechgrove, and they talked of wintering there, and re-engaged the house. But I don't know how it was ; she was a sweet pretty woman to be sure, but did not look over wise ; and it happened to her as to Cowley's Beauty in his "Chronicle," her reign was short—

"One month, three days, and half an hour
Judith held the sovereign power."

Her husband whisked her off to Paris at the end of five weeks.

They were succeeded by a man in the prime of life, and a woman in its very morning ; an elegant but most melancholy pair, who brought with them no bridal favours, no gay carriages, no proud servants, no titles, no name. He was of a person splendidly beautiful—tall, stately, commanding ; of a regality of port, and a haughtiness of aspect almost defying, as if expecting inquiry and determined to look it down. It was only when gazing at his fair companion, that his bright eye softened, and his demeanour changed into the most gentle expression of tenderness and submission. He appeared de-

voted to her ; and would read to her on the lawn, ride with her, or drive her in a little open chaise for hours together. She, on the other hand, although receiving his attentions with unalterable sweetness, seemed best pleased to glide away alone, given up to her own thoughts,—sad thoughts, alas ! I fear they were !—to her cheerless prospects and mournful recollections. She would walk with her bonnet in her hand, and her beautiful curls put back from her white temples, as if air were necessary to still their throbbing,—and she would so sigh ! Poor thing ! poor thing ! once she came to church, closely veiled, downcast, and trembling. She had forgotten the key of her own pew, and was invited by the vicar's lady into hers. And she went in, and knelt in the lowest place, and sat out great part of the service. But the sermon was affecting ; it spake of female frailty ; of the woman taken in adultery ; of sin and of forgiveness. She could not bear it, and left the church. She never entered it afterwards. Poor thing ! guilt was there, but shame and repentance were there also. She was born for better things ; and shrank from the eye as if looks were swords.

Without any intention of watching this lovely downcast penitent—for most lovely she was !—it so happened that I met her frequently ; and although we never spoke, she grew so familiarized to my passing her in the lanes, as not to start and tremble at my appearance, like a fluttered dove,—as was usual with her, on the sight of strangers. She would even stop to fondle my greyhound, Mayflower, who, with the extraordinary instinct of her kind, had been attracted by her sweet countenance, and never failed to accost her. May and she were quite acquainted ; she had even learnt her name. We used to meet almost every day ; especially in one spot, which soon became as much her favourite as it had long been mine.

About half a mile to the right of Beechgrove, a shady lane leads to a beautiful patch of woodland scenery,—the lingering

remains of an ancient chase. Turfy sheep-walks intersect thick brakes of fern and holly, mingled with rich old thorns, and the light feathery birch, and surmounted by noble oaks and beeches, the growth of centuries. In one of the recesses of the wood, just opposite the deep clear pond, which lets the light so finely into this forest picture, stands a real cottage, rough, rude, irregular, mis-shapen ; with its hedged-in garden, and its well-stocked orchard ; all evidently cribbed from the waste, and sufficiently spacious to give an air of unusual comfort to the rural dwelling. The cart-shed too, and the faggot-pile, and the old horse grazing before the door, indicate a considerable portion of rustic prosperity.

In fact they are a thriving family. Charles North, the head of the house, is a jobbing gardener, whose services are in such request, that they are accorded somewhat in the manner of favours, and must be bespoken as long beforehand as the attendance of a first singer at a musical party. He is a fine athletic man, whose firm upright form, and bold, hale, lively visage, contrast rather strangely with the premature grey locks that hang around the latter. In manner he is singularly agreeable, full of shrewdness and good humour, very merry, and a little arch ; perceiving, instantly, the weaknesses of those with whom he converses, and humouring them as much from pliability of temper, and a natural sympathy, as from views of interest. The rogue is my factotum ; and sees at a glance which hyacinth to prefer, and which geranium to admire. Good gardener as he is, I doubt if this be not the great secret of Charles North's popularity. Popular he is, that is certain ; perhaps the most popular person of my acquaintance : quite good enough to please the wise, and not too good to alarm the gay ; for the rest, an excellent husband and excellent father, a thoroughly sober and industrious man, except now and then an outbreak at tide times, which commonly lasts for a day or two, and leaves him more ardently laborious than ever. One of the most enviable persons whom

I have ever encountered, is Charles North in his blue apron.

He however is very seldom seen at his pleasant home. He trudges forth, whistling, at four o'clock every morning, and comes back, still whistling, about seven at night. The cottage at the woodside is quite populous enough without him. To say nothing of his ailing wife, who is what in a lady would be called nervous; there were at the time of which I speak, thirteen goodly children, from twenty years old, to eight months. Shall I give a catalogue? Yes. First, an eldest son, a baker, (for one of the protuberances which make the dwelling so picturesque, is a huge oven,) Charles North, Junior,—tall and vigorous as his father,—a staid sober youth, who by dint of the small pox and a miraculous gravity, might pass for the father of the family himself. Then an eldest sister, stout and steady; a home-keeping Martha North, acting as regent during her mother's illnesses, which know no pause; deputy mistress, and deputy servant of the whole house. Then a fine open countenanced girl, her father in petticoats, parcel pickle, and parcel coquette,—who puts her hair in curl papers, and flirts with one half of the parish, and romps with the other, as she carries her brother's bread round the country,—sole driver of the old white horse; we have not a prettier black-eyed lass in the village than Sally North. Then Tom, who goes to work with his father, and is, at a word, Sally in breeches. Then there were four or five urchins, names unknown, who attended sundry seminaries, some for charity, some for pay. Then three or four others, sex unknown, imps in tattered frocks, dirty, noisy, healthy, and happy, who dabbled by the side of the pond with the ducks and geese, or helped the pigs to find acorns in the wood. Last of all the baby,—a rosy smiling brat, clean amidst all the dirt, and placid amidst all the uproar, who lived out of doors like a gipsy, and might be seen in its little pink frock, stretching its round hardy limbs on the turf, or sitting in infantine state

with its back propped against a tree, from morning to night, the general pet and plaything of the family.

This infant was evidently the attraction which drew the fair tenant of Beechgrove to this secluded spot. May and I used to dive into the recesses of the wood, scenery where you may almost realize the delicious creations of "Comus," and "As you Like It;" but *she* always paused at the cottage, always as near as possible to the baby. It was a child that, for mere childish beauty, would have been remarked amongst thousands. The square vigorous form; the dimpled hands and feet, and elbows, so firm, so mottled, of so pure a carnation; the fair open forehead, with little rings of brown hair curling round it; the large bright blue eye; the delicate features; and the sweet look of content, the passionless composure, which give a dignity to infant loveliness, would have made Mary North a model for Sir Joshua. No one ever passed without admiring the child, but on no one did her beauty produce such an effect as on this unhappy lady. She could not pass: she seemed to intend it sometimes; but always stopped, and returned to her old station near the cottage.

Her object was, evidently, Mary. At first, she tried to talk to Mrs. North, to Martha, to the little ones that dabbled round the pond: but the effort was visibly painful; and she soon desisted from it; content to hang over the little girl, or to sit on the grass at her side, sometimes crying, sometimes with a heart-broken look, as if her tears were gone. The child's name, if accidentally pronounced, always occasioned a convulsive shuddering; and one day, Mrs. North, unable to resist the curiosity excited by these extraordinary proceedings, said to her, "I fancy, Ma'am, for so young as you look, that you must have had a little Mary of your own!"—"Once," was the answer, with a burst of bitter grief, "once!"—"It's a sad affliction," pursued Mrs. North, "to bury a baby, especially the first. I lost mine, poor innocent! but I have thought,

since, how much happier she is than my Mary would be, if I was to die now, and leave her motherless in the wide world."—"Oh my Mary! my Mary! my child! my child!" cried the unhappy lady, and fell to the ground, in strong and obstinate convulsive fits.

She was conveyed home, and came no more to the cottage by the wood side. In a few days, Beechgrove was again vacant, and she was gone; leaving for Mrs. North a little green purse containing eighteen guineas, and some silver, and a small slip of paper, on which was written, "For your Mary, from a mother who *left* her child!"—Poor thing! poor thing! we have never heard of her since.

Mary North is now a rosy prattler, the life and joy of her humble home, the loveliest and gayest creature that ever lived. But, better than playing with her doll, better even than base-ball, or sliding, or romping, does she like to creep of an evening to her father's knee, and look at the well-hoarded purse, (not a shilling has been taken out,) and gaze with a mysterious feeling of awe at her little heart, on the slip of uneven writing; and hear, for the hundredth time, the story of the poor lady who was so good to Mary when she was a baby,—the beautiful lady of Beechgrove.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

THE FRENCH TEACHER.

It is now more than twenty years since I, a petted child of ten years old, born and bred in the country, and as shy as a hare, was sent to that scene of bustle and confusion, a London school. Oh what a change it was! What a terrible change! The good old nurse, and the sweet gentle mamma, and the

dear, dear papa, who in their several ways seemed to have no other object than that of spoiling me from morning to night,—to leave them and my own dear home for this strange new place; and these strange new people,—what a change! And so many of them! and children too! Men and women I could have endured: but I had been a solitary child, and hated nothing so much as the din, the laughter, the shrill voices, and rapid motions of children. They fairly made me dizzy. I shall never forget the misery of the first two days, blushing to be looked at, dreading to be spoken to, shrinking like a sensitive plant from the touch, ashamed to cry, and feeling as if I never could laugh again. I was broken-hearted. These disconsolate feelings are not astonishing, even in recollection; the wonder is, that they so soon passed away. But every body was good and kind. There was just attention enough from the heads of the house, and a merciful neglect from the pupils. In less than a week the poor wild bird was tamed. I could look without fear on the bright happy faces; listen without starting to the clear high voices, even though they talked in French; began to watch the ball and the battledore; and felt something like an inclination to join in the sports. In short, I soon became an efficient member of the commonwealth; as efficient as a quiet little girl of ten years old could be; made a friend, provided myself with a school-mother, a fine tall blooming girl, who, having attained the dignity of the first class, and the mature age of fourteen, already thought herself a young woman, under whose powerful protection I began to learn and unlearn, to acquire the habits and enter into the views of my companions, as well disposed to be idle as the best of them.

Nobody was less thought of in this respectable school than our respectable governess. She seldom came near us. Her post was to sit all day, nicely dressed, in a nicely furnished drawing-room, busy with some pieces of delicate needle-work, receiving mammas, aunts, and godmammias, answering ques-

tions, and administering as much praise as she conscientiously could,—perhaps a little more. In the school-room she ruled, like other rulers, by ministers and delegates, of whom the French Teacher was the principal. When I first arrived, this high post was filled by the daughter of an *émigré* of distinction, a gentle drooping creature, who looked downward like a columbine, and was totally unequal to contend with twenty light-hearted and boisterous girls. She was the prettiest piece of melancholy that I have ever seen ; as pale as alabaster, with large black eyes, that seemed made for tears, and a voice “far above singing.” I do not think she could chide ; she did not know how. Nobody could help loving a creature so mild and inoffensive ; and there was something, with this gentleness, of purity and dignity, that insured our respect—it clung to her like a garment. She did her duty scrupulously, as far as instruction went, but left all other cares to the English Teacher,—a very different person, coarse and common as could be ; a better sort of nursery maid ; one who from pure laziness would rather do things herself than take the trouble to see that they were done by another. Under her fosterage our evil habits thrived apace : she put away, and hid, and lied for us, till we became the most irregular and untidy generation that ever trod the floor of a school-room. All seemed fair in the sight of the governess ; and whilst our drooping lily Mademoiselle L. remained, all was quiet. But these happy days could not last long. She left us in the short peace of Amiens to join her parents in an attempt to recover some part of their property, in which, I am happy to say, she was successful ; whilst with her unlucky pupils the reign of king Log was succeeded by that of king Stork. The new French Teacher came ; a tall, majestic woman, between sixty and seventy, made taller by yellow slippers with long slender heels, such as I have never seen before or since. I cannot imagine how she could walk in them, though her way of moving scarcely deserved the name. Her mode of entering

a room, or saluting a person, "*son abord*," as she called it, was a trip, a sort of quick mincing shuffle, ending in a low curtsy: her common motion was that of a snake, or a ghost, or her own long train, gliding quite inaudibly, in spite of her heels, whether on the Turkey carpet of the library, or the bare boards of the dancing-room. Her face was almost invisible, being concealed between a mannish kind of neckcloth, that tied in her chin, and an enormous cap, whose wide flaunting strip hung over her cheeks and eyes,—to say nothing of a huge pair of spectacles. What could be seen of the face was in a fine Roman style of beauty that answered to her figure; beautiful, in spite of age, and cap-strip, and neckcloth, and spectacles; lady-like, in spite of the high heels, the trip, the mantua-making vulgarity of scissors and pincushion dangling outside of her gown, and such a pair of panniers within as have seldom been seen in these degenerate days of reticules and work-bags. Such was the outward woman of Madame. Her inner qualities were speedily developed. We soon found that, like "Goose Gibbie," she kept the hours of her flock; went to bed at nine o'clock, and rose at six; and, instead of trying to lose the sight and sound of children in books and drawings, and running away from the very thoughts of us the moment school hours were over, as poor Mademoiselle L. used to do, Madame was content to keep us company all the day long; was never tired of us, tiresome as we were; and made no other difference between school-time and play-time than that of exchanging scolding for talking, long lessons for long stories. She superintended our sports; watched over the games of ball and battledore; reprimanded the awkward and the noisy; and finally insisted on translating our old forfeits of "Peter Piper," and "I love my love with an A," into their Gallic counterpart, "*Qui veut vendre le corbillon?*"

This was sufficiently irksome; but the worst was to come. Madame, all Parisian though she was, had the fidgety neatness of a Dutch-woman, and was scandalized at our untidy

habits. Four days passed in distant murmurs; an exercise book, found, to use her favourite word, "*trainant*" about the room, was thrown into the fire, and a skipping-rope, which nearly upset her by entangling in her train, was tossed out of the window: but this was only the gathering of the wind before the storm. It was dancing-day; we were all dressed and assembled, when Madame, provoked by some indication of latent disorder, some stray pinafore or pocket-handkerchief peeping from under the form that was meant to conceal it, instituted, much to our consternation, a general rummage through the house for things out of their places, which certainly comprised the larger half of our possessions. Every hole and corner were searched for contraband goods, and the collected mass thrown together in one stupendous pile in the middle of the school room; a pile that defies description or analysis. Bonnets, old and new, with strings and without, pelisses, tippets, parasols, unmatched shoes, halves of pairs of gloves, books tattered or whole, music in many parts, pin-cushions, petticoats, thimbles, frocks, sashes, dolls, portfolios, shuttlecocks, play-things, work-things, trumpery without end. The entire mass was to be apportioned amongst the different owners and then affixed to their persons, after the fashion of some of Mr. Lancaster's punishments, though, to do Madame justice, the design, under her management, was altogether French. She had generously taken the most difficult part herself, and was much in the situation of the Princess in the Fairy Tale, who was put into a great hall full of feathers, and ordered to select from the mingled heap those which belonged to every separate bird. Poor Madame! she was worse off than the princess—she had no good Genius to help her—she did not even know the plumage of her little birds—sad refractory birds as ever beat their wings against a cage. Poor Madame! Article after article was fished up from the mass, and held out to be owned in vain; not a soul would claim such dangerous property: gloves looked about for hands to wear them;

slippers were like the famous glass one, and fitted nobody ; bonnets wanted heads ; dolls went a begging. Poor Madame ! Even when she found a name, it did her little service ; she had, to be sure, in ten years, picked up some ten words of English,—but proper names ! she never came so near them in her life as old Bassompierre, when he wrote Innimthorpe for Kensington. Even if she made a distant approach to the sounds in pronunciation, she would never have recognised them when written ; it was two to one against her hitting on the initial letter. Nevertheless she did succeed, by dint of lucky guesses and questions which could not be parried, in apportioning quite sufficient to form a style of decoration more novel than elegant,—an order of demerit. Dictionaries suspended from the neck *en médaillon*, shawls tied round the waist *en ceinture*, unbound music pinned to the frock *en queue*, formed a slight part of our adornment ; not one of us but had three or four of these appendages ; many had five or six. These preparations were intended to meet the eye of Madame's countryman, the French dancing-master, who would doubtless assist in supporting her authority, and in making us thoroughly ashamed. She did not know that before his arrival we were to pass an hour in an exercise of another kind, standing on one leg like geese upon a common, or facing to right and left, under the command of a drill-sergeant. The man of scarlet was ushered in ; and it is difficult to say, whether the professor of marching or the improver of discipline looked most astonished : the culprits, I am afraid, supported by numbers and amused by the ridiculous appearance of their corps, were not so much disconcerted as they should have been. Madame began a very voluble explanatory harangue ; but she was again unfortunate,—the sergeant did not understand French. She attempted to translate—"It is, Sare, que ces dames, dat dese Miss be des traineuses." This clear and intelligible sentence producing no other visible effect than a shake of the head, Madame desired the nearest culprit to tell "*ce*

soldat là" what she had said, and to inform her what he could possibly be come for. Our interpreter was puzzled in her turn, as much puzzled as Pistol's boy, when bidden to construe "fer ferret and firk" to Monsieur le Fer. She had to find English for *traineuses*, (no dictionary word! I believe Madame invented it expressly for our use,) and French for drill-sergeant. She got through her difficulties vastly well, called him of the red coat a walking-master, and confessed frankly that we were in disgrace. The sergeant was a man of bowels; besides, he hated the French; he declared that "it made his blood boil to see so many free-born English girls domineered over by a natural enemy," and as he said this, he eyed poor Madame as fiercely as if she had been a member of the Legion of Honour: finally he insisted that we could not march with such encumbrances; which declaration being done into French all at once by half a dozen eager tongues, the trappings were removed, and the experiment ended without any very sensible improvement.

Inauspicious as the beginning was, in a short time we did improve; our habits became more regular, we began to feel the comfort of order, and we began to like Madame. She lived with us, and for us, like a family nurse, or a good old grandmamma, (only that she did not spoil us,)—she had no other occupation, no other thought, scarcely another friend in the world; and she had herself an aptness to love which could not fail to attach young hearts. It was touching to see that respectable woman homeless and desolate in her old age, clinging to children for society and comfort, joining in their pursuits and amusements, and bringing down her own thoughts and feelings to their comprehension. Her youth of mind and simplicity of heart kept her happy; I doubt whether grown people would have suited her so well. She entered thoroughly and heartily into our little schemes, and had more of her own than all the school put together. Never found mortal such pleasure in small surprises, innocent secrets, and mysterious

gifts. Cherries dropped in our path like fairy favours ; sweet-peas and mignonette springing up, as if by magic, in our little gardens ; purses netted under the table and smuggled into our pockets no one knew how ; birth-day *fêtes* gotten up as secretly as state conspiracies—these were her delights. She was cross sometimes, and strict enough always ; but we loved Madame, and Madame loved us. I really think she would have been one of the happiest creatures in the world, but for a strange aversion which she unluckily took to a very charming young lady, a woman of genius and a poetess, who succeeded to the functions of the stupid English teacher. The dislike was mutual. Never were two better haters. Their relative situation had probably something to do with it ; and yet it was wonderful that two such excellent persons should so thoroughly detest each other. Miss R.'s aversion was of the cold, phlegmatic, contemptuous, provoking sort ; she kept aloof, and said nothing : Madame's was acute, fiery, and loquacious ; she not only hated Miss R., but hated, for her sake, knowledge and literature, and wit, and, above all, poetry, which she denounced as something fatal and contagious, like the plague. I shall never forget her horror when she detected one of her favourites in the act of translating a stanza of Tasso into something that looked like verse ; if she had caught her committing forgery, her lamentations could not have been more indignantly pathetic. What would she say now ?

I have already mentioned with honour Madame's high heels. They were once put to an unexpected use. She had been ill, and had gone into lodgings on the other side of London, to be near her favourite physician. We soon found a relaxation of discipline ; our poetess piqued herself upon managing us in a different way from her rival (she never suspected that we managed her) ; besides which, she had a most comfortable habit of abstraction, and seldom saw what passed before her eyes. The business of the school went on as usual ; but our

amusements were left to ourselves, and a dramatic fury raged high amongst us. Our first performance was Pizarro, that delight of children. In this choice we had one trifling difficulty, the absence of the printed play; but most of the actors had seen the piece, and we managed it by memory and invention. I should like to see a variorum edition of our Pizarro. The Spanish hero himself had never seen the tragedy; but he was a very clever little Irish girl, not more than a foot shorter than Elvira, and, being well instructed in the spirit of the part, blustered through the tyrant very creditably, excepting one mistake, that of regularly ordering the soldiers to shoot Rolla three scenes before his time. The error was pardonable. Every body sympathized with Pizarro, in thinking the sooner Rolla was out of pain the better. His sufferings were exquisite. He was a fine well-grown personable girl, but labouring under such a melancholy want of words and ideas, that he felt and inflicted, in a high degree, the sort of distress which is so often caused by stammering: we could no more prevail on him to relinquish his impracticable part, than a stammerer can be persuaded to abandon the unutterable word. Elvira we chose for her especial gift in scolding, her natural shrewishness; and she did not disappoint us; she acted like a virago born, the pride and glory of the play. As to Cora, I did her myself, after an exceedingly original fashion. I recollect one trait. I did not like going mad; it was troublesome, and I did not well know how to set about it,—fainting was much easier; so I fainted, and had the pleasure of being pulled by the arms across the room, with my heels dragging along the floor, by one of our stage footmen; an operation in which I found so much amusement, that I got a part of the audience (the little girls, the demure, and the stupid) to encore my swoon.

Our next performance was Feudal Times, induced by the mistake of a silly maid, who had smuggled that pageant into the house instead of Pizarro. We performed this entertainment

to the letter, only leaving out the songs, the scenery, and the processions. Altogether, Feudal Times did not go off like Pizarro ; the zest of suspense and unexpectedness was wanting ; every body knew what was to come next ; no delightful blunders, no happy mistakes, no tragedy in our comedy, and far too little comedy in our tragedy ; it was as dull as a lesson, and the run would have been short. We had already begun to turn our attention to a stray copy of Deaf and Dumb, when an unlucky accident put an entire stop to our dramatic career. In the melancholy of Feudal Times one part seemed indispensable to the story. The heroine, a lady Claribel, is picked up out of a moat by a certain fisherman called Walter, into which moat she had been precipitated by the same Walter's sawing asunder a draw-bridge, which her oppressor, the Baron, was defending against her lover. This we contrived almost as notably as the wall and moonshine were managed in Bottom's play, by tying together two long high forms, which Walter, seated tailor fashion in a short low form, turned topsyturvy, to resemble a boat, divided with a knife, catching hold at the same time of the lady Claribel, and pushing off with her to her lover, who stood on the chalked line which we called the bank. Four afternoons was this manœuvre adroitly performed : on the fifth an over-eager combatant lost his balance, and fell over just as the bridge was sawing asunder ; in falling he caught at the baron's white frock, who, overset in his turn, clung to the bridge, and down they came, vassal, baron, and bridge, together with the fair lady Claribel, full on the unlucky boat and the unfortunate boatman. The crash was tremendous. An universal scream from actors and spectators soon brought Miss R. to the scene, and disturbed the tranquil course of Mrs. **'s embroidery. The mischief was less than might have been expected ; a few bruises, one broken form, and two torn frocks ; but the fright, the din, and the clatter, made too deep an impression to be overcome ; the drama was instantly proscribed, Feudal Times thrown on the fire, and Deaf and Dumb put under lock and key.

When once however the theatrical fever is thoroughly excited, it is not easily allayed, especially if heightened by a prohibition. We were just on the point of actual rebellion, and had contrived a plot for regaining Deaf and Dumb, when a turn was given to our ideas by one of the confederates going to the opera, and coming back with her head full of a Scottish divertisement and the ballet of Orpheus and Eurydice. We hesitated a long time which to choose; to have one we were determined. A ballet was not a play; there was no edict against dancing; and, as the Grecian and Scottish parties ran high, we boldly resolved to blend the two stories into one. "Rather improbable, to be sure," said our manager, "but not impossible. No reason on earth why Orpheus might not go to Scotland in search of Eurydice; we must make that understood in the bills. The ballet will be quite as intelligible one way as the other." Quite. The union of twenty plots would not have puzzled our ballet mistress; the confusion of her brain defied increase. I cannot attempt a minute detail of our performance. Venus—for we enlisted the whole corps of gods and goddesses in our service—Venus, a black-haired brown gipsy, rather quick-witted than beautiful, slid about in a pasteboard car, which she pushed forward much as a child manages a go-cart, driving cruelly over her paper doves, and stooping every moment to pick them up and set them flying again. Cupid, the *ci-devant* Pizarro, was the charm of the piece, full of grace and playfulness, he managed his shining wings with great address, and his bows and arrows still better. One of his feats was the demolition of a pasteboard fortress, which we had erected across one corner of the room, just large enough to contain the Scottish heroine, and ingeniously contrived to keep together by strings held in her hand, which she dropped as soon as Cupid drew his bow, and sprang away from her prison. This piece of machinery was our principal attempt in that line; but we had made great advances in costume since the luckless night when the baron was brought to the ground by a pull at his white frock. Our Highland lasses

had muslin aprons bound with tartan ribands, the right Highland dress of the Opera House; Jupiter had a rich pelisse; and Pluto a beard—a fine tuft of bear-skin, docked by our manager from her own fur tippet. This conscious splendour inspired us with a desire for a more numerous audience. We invited two or three young ladies of the neighbourhood, who came to take lessons in dancing; Miss R. too we asked, the parlour-boarders, and the good old housekeeper. The evening arrived, the spectators were seated, unexpectedly reinforced by Mrs. **, in high good-humour; and we danced on in triumphant confusion, till we came to the grand scene of the infernal regions. We had been at some loss as to the management of the classical Hell. Even our undoubting manager was posed. Fire seemed to our simple apprehensions a necessary element. The Furies must have torches. No dispensing with that engine of horror. Accordingly we erected a sort of artificial rock-work, composed of tables, stools, and trunks, of unequal height, over which was flung a large covering of canvass. Towards the centre of this machine we placed a saucer full of burning spirits of wine, emitting much such a flame as I have seen issue at Christmas from a minced-pie floated with burning brandy. Our orchestra was playing "The Soldier Tired," the whole dramatis personæ, gods and mortals, Greeks and Scots, were assembled on the stage; Orpheus was casting his memorable look back on Eurydice; and the Furies were lighting their torches at the blazing spirits—when the folding doors flew back, and Madame appeared in the opening, muffled in white drapery, motionless for a moment, and then gliding gently in, like another Castle Spectre. One of the Furies, in astonishment at this apparition, dropped her torch, and set fire to the canvass covering just as Madame reached the rock-work. The flame caught her eye, and she dexterously whisked off her slipper, and tapped out the fire with its slender high heel. I still seem to hear the quick clear sound of those taps. She then grace-

fully resumed her shoe and her tripping motion, and glided up to Mrs. **, with her usual mincing pace. So ended our ballet. We crowded round our dear old friend, and thought no more of Orpheus and Eurydice.

MY SCHOOL-FELLOWS.

“Five pupils were my stint, the other
I took to compliment his mother.”

PLEADER'S GUIDE.

ALL the world knows what a limited number of pupils means ; our stint was twenty ; and really, considering the temptations of great girls, very great girls, too old to learn, as parlour-boarders ; and little girls, very little girls, too young to learn, as pets, we kept to it vastly well. We were not often more than thirty ; principally because the house would not, with a proper regard to health and accommodation—points never forgotten by our excellently-intentioned governess—conveniently contain a greater number. If the next house could have been procured, we should soon have increased to fifty ; and, indeed, might have gone on gradually multiplying till we had travelled half round the square : for Mrs. S. had always a difficulty in saying no—that ugliest of monosyllables—and the task was not rendered easier when she was beset by the mingled temptations of interest, flattery, and affection. It was best as it was ; we were quite enough, even though, early in my abode, a lucky accident incident to the state ridded us of those anomalous personages, the parlour-boarders.

An old pupil having arrived at the presentation age, seventeen, and her guardians not knowing exactly what to do with her, she was continued in H. P. upon that footing. I shall never forget the difference that one day made in this fair damsel ! Translated on a sudden from the school-room to the drawing-room ! preferred at once over the heads of her fel-

lows ! I never saw such a change. Perhaps a *parvenu* of the French Revolution might be something like it, or a boy officer in his first regimentals, or a knight of the last edition, or an author the night of a successful play, or a court beauty in her birth-day plumes, or any other shuttlecock pate, giddy with happiness and vanity. She was no worse, poor thing, than most girls of seventeen or eighteen ; that transition state when learning is laid aside and knowledge not come ; she was ostentatiously idle always, and affrontingly gracious or astoundingly impertinent by fits and starts—patronized one day and forgot the next. No M. P. freshly elected for an independent borough ever experienced a more sudden loss of memory. There was nothing remarkable in this ; but unluckily nature never intended our poor *parvenu* for a lady of consequence. She was born to be a child all her days ; and, which was much worse, to look like one ;—the most insignificant little fair-haired girl that ever lived. Dress did nothing for her : her very milliner gave her up in despair. Gowns turned into frocks when tied round her slim straight waist ;—caps, turbans, feathers, muffs, all artificial means of giving age, and size, and importance, failed in this unfortunate case. Never did a faded beauty take so much pains to look like a girl as she did to look like a woman. I believe that she would have consented to be dressed like her grandmother, if it would have made her seem as old. But all was in vain ; time only could cure her obstinate youthfulness of form and expression, and time travelled rather slower with the idle girl than he had been used to do with the busy one ; so that, after a few days' display of her gay plumage, she wearied of her airs and her finery, and withdrew as much as possible from her old companions, to partake of the larger society and more varied amusements amongst which she began to be introduced. Three months after, she re-appeared in the school-room quite a different creature, absent, pensive, languishing, silly beyond her usual silliness, and in great want of a sympathizing

friend. She soon found one of course ; every "Tilburina, mad in white satin," may make sure of a "confidante mad in white dimity." She soon found a friend, a tall, sleepy-eyed girl, as simple as herself—and then the closetings, the note-writings, the whisperings, the mystery, the importance ! The whole school was on tiptoe to find out the secret, and the confidante was in great danger of telling, when, luckily for her reputation, the secret told itself. One fine night, when the moon shone brightly, the fair Tilburina set off for Gretna Green. After this, we had no more parlour-boarders.

But although we had no more parlour-boarders, we were fertile in great girls,—young ladies sent from the country for "improvement," as the milliners say, who, after a seven years' apprenticeship in some provincial fashion-shop, come up to the capital to be finished : (alas ! they generally found that they had to begin)—or the desperately naughty and the hopelessly dull, banished from home to be out of the way, and to try what school would do ;—or the luckless daughters of the newly wealthy, on whom the magic air of a London seminary was expected to work as sudden a transformation as the wand of Cinderella's fairy godmother. They were the most to be pitied. How often, during the fiery ordeal of the first half-year, they must have wished themselves poor again ! The most interesting of these unfortunate rich people were three sisters from Orkney, the youngest past sixteen, whose mother had unexpectedly succeeded to the large inheritance of an Indian cousin. They were gentlewomen born and bred, these Minnas and Brendas of the Shetland Islands, though as wild and unformed and as much used to liberty as their country ponies. Unaccomplished they were of course, but they could never have been thought ignorant any where but in a London school. The mistake lay in sending them there, amongst a tribe of little pedants with all the scaffolding of learning about them. The eldest bore the transition pretty well. She had had health too delicate to enjoy in all its licence her natural

freedom ; and had lived two or three years with an aunt in Edinburgh, so that she was become in a manner reconciled to civilization ; besides, she had a natural taste for elegance and refinement, and gave her whole attention and free will to the difficult task of beginning at twenty to conquer the rudiments of French and Italian, and music and drawing. The second sister weathered the storm almost equally well, though in a different manner. She was so overflowing with health and spirits, so fearless and uncaring, so good-humouredly open in confessing her deficiencies, and so wisely regardless of lectures and exhortations, that she won her way through the turmoil of lessons and masters, without losing an atom of her hardihood and buoyancy. To be sure she learned nothing ; but there was no great harm in that. Her younger sister was not so fortunate—Oh, that charming sister Anne ! They were all fine tall young women, but Anne was something more. I never saw any thing so lovely as her bright blooming complexion, her glittering blue eyes, and her light agile form, when in some cold windy morning, that reminded her of Orkney, she would bound across the garden, with her hat in her hand, and her brown curling hair about her shoulders, forgetting in the momentary enjoyment where she was and all around her. That blessed oblivion could not last long ; and then came the unconquerable misery of shame, and fear, and shyness, a physical want of liberty and fresh air, and a passionate and hopeless longing for her early home. She pined and withered away like a wild bird in a cage, or a hardy mountain plant in a hot-house ; and without any definite complaint, was literally dying under the united influence of confinement, and smoke, and the French grammar. They carried her into the country, first to Richmond, then to Windsor Forest ; but trees and quiet waters had no power over her associations. They talked of a journey to Italy,—that was worse still ; she loathed the “sweet breath of the south.” At last they were wiser ; they took her home ; and the sweet

Anne, restored to her old habits and her own dear island, recovered. Nothing else could have saved her.

A complete contrast to these fair Zetlanders might be found in another triad of sisters, old settlers in H. P.,—short, dark, lively girls, who knew the school as men are said sometimes to know the town, and knew nothing else ; were clever there and there only. Their father, a widower, and a man of business, sent them from home mere infants, and, providing kindly and carefully for their improvement and comfort, seldom sought to be pleased or troubled with their company. This was no hardship to these stirring spirits, who loved the busy stage on which they played such capital parts, foremost every where, especially in mischief, first to be praised and last to be found out. They were as nearly alike in age and stature, as three sisters born at three different times well could be,—any two of them might have passed for twins ; and having in common a certain readiness of apprehension, a quickness of memory, and an extraordinary pliability of temper, as well as the brown complexion, the trim small figure and quick black eye, they usually passed for fac-similes of one another in mind and person. There were differences, however, in both. Catherine, the eldest, was by far the most perfect specimen of school craft. She was a manœuvrer, such as it did one good to see ; got places and prizes nobody knew how ; escaped by a miracle from all scrapes ; was a favourite at once with the French teacher and the English ; was idle, yet cited for industry ; naughty, yet held up as a pattern of good conduct ; thoroughly selfish, and yet not disliked. She was, in short, a perfect stateswoman ; wound the whole school round her finger ; and wanted nothing of art but the art to conceal it. Even that point she might have compassed, had not her features and voice stood in her way—a lurking slyness in her smile and her eye, and a sort of *false* tone in her speech. But she did no harm, and meant none. She drove straight to her objects, but she took care not to upset the passers by. Charlotte,

the next sister, was not content with this negative merit ; she had all the address of her elder-born, and made a more generous use of it ; got praise and prizes for herself, and pardons and holidays for all the world. Hers was real popularity—nobody could help loving Charlotte. She was like Catherine too ; but it was such a pretty likeness, with her laughing gipsy face and her irresistible power of amusing. She was a most successful and daring mimic, and made no scruple of taking people off to their faces, and would march out of the room after Mrs. S. or poor Madame with the most perfect and ludicrous imitation of the slow measured step of the one and the mincing trip of the other, the very moment after she had coaxed them out of some favour. Nevertheless, we all loved Charlotte ; besides her delightful good-humour, she used her influence so kindly, and was sure to take the weaker side. We all loved Charlotte. Jane, *la cadette*, more resembled Catherine, only her ambition was of a lower flight. She was a cautious diplomatist, and aimed less at success than at safety, had a small quiet party amongst the younger fry, was the pet of the housemaids, and won her way by little attentions,—by mending gloves, making pincushions, drawing patterns, and running on errands, in which last accomplishment she had an alertness so surprising, that Madame used to say she dazzled her eyes. In spite of her obligingness, nobody thought of loving Miss Jane ; but she got on astonishingly well without it, and managed her wisers and betters by falling in with their ways.

All our sisters were not so much alike. One pair was strikingly different. The eldest, the favourite of a very silly mother, was a beauty, poor child, and subject to all the discipline which growing beauties are fated to endure. Oh the lacing, the bracing, the bonneting, the veiling, the gloving, the staying within for fear of sun or wind, or frost or fog ! Her mamma would fain have had her wear a mask to preserve her complexion, and so much dreaded the sweet touch of the

air, that her poor victim seldom got out of doors, and had little other exercise than dancing and the dumb bells. I am sure she would have given "all the worlds that people ever have to give," to be plain. Morally speaking, perhaps, it was well for her that beauty should come in the shape of so disagreeable a consciousness; it effectually preserved her from vanity. She was a most genuine, kind-hearted, natural girl, thoroughly free from conceit or pretension of any kind. Her sister Julia had enough for both. Miss Julia was the pet of a father, who was, though in a different line, quite as silly as his wife; and having a tolerable memory, a plodding spirit of application, and an unbounded appetite for applause, was in training for a learned lady, a blue stocking in embryo. What an insufferable little pedant it was, with its studies and its masters, more in number than the instructors of the *bourgeois gentil-homme*, its dictionaries of arts and sciences, and its languages without end! Words! words! words! nothing but words! One idea would have put her out. It was a pity, too, for she was a good-natured and well-meaning person, only so grave, and dull, and formal. However precious her learning might have been, she would have bought it dearly, for it cost her her youthfulness,—at thirteen she was old. Neither did this incessant diligence tell as one might have expected with her masters; they praised her of course, and held her up as an example to the clever and the idle; but I don't think they would have been much charmed to have had many such pupils. Certainly she was the least in the world of a goose; always troublesome in asking stupid questions, and more troublesome still in not understanding the answers. Once, indeed, she made a grand display of science and erudition. Mr. Walker came to give us a course of lectures, and Miss Julia pulled out a little square red book, and made notes—notes in a sort of hieroglyphic, which she was pleased to call short-hand; incomprehensible notes—notes that may sometimes have been paralleled since at the Royal Institution, but which nobody

had ever dreamed of in our school. Oh! the glory of those pot-hooks and hangers! As if purposely to enhance her reputation, one of her class-fellows, who was in a careless idle way, something of a rival to Miss Julia, happened to be an egregious coward, hated guns and gunpowder, squibs and crackers, and all those iniquitous shocks and noises which are at once sudden and expected. She had sitten out, with grief and pain, by help of ducking her head, shutting her eyes, and putting her fingers in her ears, two or three popgun lectures on chemistry and mechanics: but when the electricity came, she could bear it no longer; she fairly ran away, escaped unperceived in the *melée*, and ensconced herself under her own bed, where she might have remained undetected till doomsday, had not the unforeseen vigour of a cleanly house-maid, fresh from the country, fairly unearthed her, actually swept her out. Think what a contrast! What a triumph! Courage, and short-hand notes of lectures, on the one side; cowardice, ignorance, and running away, on the other! Miss Julia was never so tall in her life. The *éclat* of the little square book even consoled her, when, in the week after this adventure, a prize, for which she had been trying all the half-year, was wrested from her by the runaway.

Besides the usual complement of languid East Indians, and ardent Creoles, we had our full share of foreigners. Of one charming Italian girl, much older than myself, I remember little but the sweet sighing voice, the graceful motions, and the fine air of the head. I always think of her when I look at the Cartoons;—Raphael must have studied from such women. She left school shortly after my arrival there, and was succeeded by an exquisitely pretty Anglo-Portuguese, whom, from her name, her aversion to roast pig—strange antipathy!—and her regularly spending Saturday at home, we suspected (for it was not avowed) to be a Jewess. Be that as it may, she was the most splendid piece of natural colouring that I ever beheld. An ivory complexion, with cheeks and

lips like damask roses, black laughing eyes with long silky lashes, and rich clusters of black curls parting on her white brow. She was beauty itself. She soon went away too; and then came the daughter of a crack-brained Austrian Baron, straight from Vienna. There was nothing remarkable in her face or person, except the tender expression of her large blue eyes: yet she was peculiar from her foreign dress and manner, and her ignorance of all languages save her native German, and so much Italian as might help her through the most ordinary wants and duties of the day. Above all, she was interesting from her gentleness, her melancholy, and her early and disastrous fate. She died suddenly during the summer holidays. How many young hearts grieved for her, even amid the joys of home; and how we missed her sweet patient looks, her few words—all words of kindness, it seemed as if she could learn no other—when we returned! We were not wise to grieve; her short life had been a life of sorrow, and the grave was her best resting-place. It is not wise—but still, after a lapse of twenty years, it saddens me to think of her death. And there is another, and a far dearer school-fellow, a foreigner, too, of whom I think almost as sadly; for we are parted by such distance, that even now as I write I know not if she be alive or dead. I speak of the young Countess C., sent from Russia for the advantage of an English education, began under a private governess, and concluded with us. She is difficult to describe—perhaps because she was so simple and so grand. She resembled the Greek drama in her pure and harmonious beauty; and the gentle dignity of her manner sustained the impression. Every body admired her, though only one dared to love her; and the repaying that love by the most constant and cordial affection allowed not much intercourse beyond a general kindness and good-will with the rest of our little world. In truth she had no time for intimacies! she had a hunger and thirst for knowledge, such as I have never seen equalled: knowledge of all sorts and de-

grees, from the most trifling womanly occupations—making gum-seals, imitating cameos, working frills, up to the severest manly studies, mathematics and the classics. I never saw any one so universally accomplished. Music, though she played well on many instruments, was perhaps the least striking of her acquirements; drawing and languages the most so. Her English especially was enchanting; you could just distinguish her from a native by an originality, a raciness, a floating grace, like that which pervades the letters of Mrs. Klopstock. Oh! what a charming creature she was! How thoroughly free from vanity and self-conceit! her industry was astonishing; she used to apologize for it sometimes, as I sat at her side doing nothing. “Really,” she would say, “she could not help it!”—as if her diligence had been a fault, and my idleness a virtue. The dear, dear Sophia! parting from her was my first sorrow.

Last on our roll of foreigners came two French girls: one of them merely a fair specimen of her pleasant nation—sprightly, good-humoured, amusing, and plain: the other a person of some note in this chronicle, being—and it is saying much—beyond all manner of competition the greatest dunce in the school. Zenobie de M—— had lost both her parents in the Revolution, and was under the care of an aunt, splendidly married, and living in London, in the very first world. She was a fine, striking, fashionable-looking girl, in the French style of beauty; rather large-boned, angular, and high-shouldered; but so light, erect, and agile, that the very defects of her figure seemed graces. Her face, though that too told her country, was pretty, in spite of a wide mouth and a cocked-up nose; pretty from its sparkling expression—all smiles and blushes, and animation: so were her manners. We had not a more agreeable and intelligent girl in the house; how she could contrive to be a dunce I cannot imagine—but a dunce she was, in the most comprehensive sense of that ill-omened word. She could not spell two syllables in any language, could scarcely write her name, could not cast up

three figures, could not construe the simplest sentence, could not read the notes in music, never could, and never did, learn the catechism. This seems incredible on recollection, and it seemed more so at the moment. Nothing but a school could have brought the fact fully out; and even with the proofs hourly before our eyes, we could not help thinking sometimes that we must have done her injustice. Her ingenuity in evading the pains and penalties of duncicalness was very great. She had a dexterous way of excusing any error in speech, by pleading her English education for a French fault, or her French birth for a mistake in English; so that she claimed to speak both languages with the allowance of a foreigner. She spoke them, as she played the piano, entirely by ear, with great elegance, but incorrectly. In all sports, or light accomplishments, she was unrivalled. Skipping-ropes, and battledores, and tambourines, and castinets, in her graceful hands, were her own delight, and the delight of all beholders. But the triumph of triumphs for Zenobie was dancing-day; to see her and her countryman the dancing-master—he teaching, and she executing, such pirouettes and entrechats as none but French heels could achieve—both looking down with a very visible contempt on “English awkwardness with two left legs.” Those Mondays and Wednesdays must pretty well have compensated for the mortifications of the rest of the week; and she needed some compensation; for, with all the splendour of her home, and the elegance of her appearance, it was evident that she was neglected. The mother’s heart and the mother’s eye were wanting! you might tell that she was an orphan. She abounded in trinkets and knick-knacks, and fashionable frippery; but no comforts, no indulgences, no garden-bonnet, no warm pelisse, no cakes or fruit, no shillings or half-crowns, no consideration for her gentlewomanly spirit! I never shall forget the generous pleasure with which she shared half a dozen oranges—the rare present of some titled friend—between those who, from

happier circumstances, had been enabled to be kind to her. Oh ! she was very desolate, very forlorn. How often, when we were going home for the holidays, with smiling mothers and fathers, so impatient that they would scarcely allow time for an adieu, I have seen her black eyes full of tears as she anticipated the hours, or days, or weeks that she must wait till an insolent waiting-maid should have leisure or will to remember her. Poor Zenobie ! she left us suddenly, to return to Paris with her aunt. The last time I heard of her she was a celebrated beauty at the court of Napoleon. I don't know what has become of her since the change of dynasty, but I hope she is about the court still—it is just what she is fit for ; she was made for feathers and long trains, and smiling, and graciousness, and dancing, and small talk ; she ought to be at court ; a court life would so become her ; and she would become it like a diamond necklace, polished and glittering and precious alike from the fashion and the material. I hope she is still at court.

We are now fairly at the end of our foreign list. There are two or three more British worthies for whom we must find a niche in another place, along with our English teacher and our authorized play.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER.

Miss R., the English teacher, to whom poor Madame took so unfortunate an aversion, was one of the most charming women that I have ever known. The pretty word “*graziosa*,” by which Napoleon loved to describe Josephine, seemed made for her. She was full of a delicate grace of mind and person. Her little elegant figure, and her fair mild face, lighted up so brilliantly by her large hazel eyes, corresponded exactly with the soft gentle manners which were so often awakened into a delightful playfulness, or an enthusiasm more charming still,

by the impulse of her quick and ardent spirit. To be sure she had a slight touch of distraction about her, (distraction French, not distraction English,) an interesting absence of mind. She united in her own person all the sins of forgetfulness of all the young ladies : mislaid her handkerchief, her shawl, her gloves, her work, her music, her drawing, her scissors, her keys ; would ask for a book when she held it in her hand, and set a whole class hunting for a thimble, whilst the said thimble was quietly perched on her finger. Oh ! with what a pitying scorn our exact and recollective Frenchwoman used to look down on such an incorrigible shatterbrain ! But she was a poetess, as Madame said, and what could you expect better.

In spite of this misfortune, she was universally liked and respected ; I, for my own part, loved Miss R. even better than Madame ! though I had some temptations to dislike her, she having, to my sorrow, undertaken the peculiar charge of my education for the last two years of my stay at school, (from thirteen to fifteen,) which she followed up with extraordinary rigour ; so that instead of passing half hours and whole hours, half days and whole days, at the side of my beautiful countess, in the full enjoyment of my dearly beloved idleness, I found myself, to my unspeakable discomposure, getting by rote (an operation which I always detested) sundry tedious abridgments of heraldry, botany, biography, mineralogy, mythology, and at least half a dozen "ologies" more, compiled by herself for my express edification. I gave her fair warning that I should forget all these wise things in no time, and kept my word ; but there was no escaping the previous formality of learning them. Oh ! dear me ! I groan in spirit at the very recollection. I was even threatened with the Latin grammar. All her instructions, however, were not administered in so unpalatable a form. To fill up any nook of time which the common demands of the school and her private lessons might leave vacant, we used to read together, chiefly poetry. With her I

first became acquainted with Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, and the Paradise Lost. Those were moments of intense gratification; she read capitally, and was a most indulgent hearer of my remarks and exclamations;—suffered me to admire Satan, and detest Ulysses, and rail at the pious Æneas as long as I chose. After these master-poets we turned to some peculiar favourites of her own, Akenside, whom I could not understand then, (neither can I now,) and Young, whom I could not read. Three weary evenings did we consume over his first three nights: but the lecture was so dismal, so afflict-ing, and my impatience and *ennui* were so contagious, that at last we fairly gave him up. I have never opened the Night Thoughts since; the bare recollection of that attempt is enough.

Beside the readings, Miss R. compensated in another way for the pain and grief of my unwilling application: she took me often to the theatre; whether as an extra branch of education, or because she was herself in the height of a dramatic fever, it would be invidious to inquire. The effect may be easily foreseen; my enthusiasm soon equalled her own: we began to read Shakspeare, and read nothing else. There was of course a great difference in kind between her pleasure and mine; hers was a critical, mine a childish enjoyment; she loved fine acting, and I loved the play. Perhaps I loved the written drama more than she did; for her admiration was given rather to the great actor than to the author; she thought more of John Kemble than of Shakspeare—it was a real passion for the stage. She never saw our great school-room without longing to turn it into a theatre. Two events, which happened in my last half-year, most unexpectedly realized her wish—though the accomplishment fell far short of her expectations. Madame, poor Madame, the determined enemy of poetry and private theatricals, left us; she returned to France, and we never saw her again; and, just at the same time, a young lady arrived from the country, so different from

all other country assignments, that our prejudices melted before her like snow in the sunshine.

Eliza M. was a tall, full-formed, noble-looking girl of sixteen, with an expressive open countenance, and a fine frankness of manner. Her conversation was singularly engaging and original,—fresh, ardent, eloquent, like that of a clever boy;—manly, not masculine. No one could be in her company five minutes without being convinced of her great powers, and of their high cultivation. To add to our astonishment, (for we had really the impertinence to think most places of education within the bills of mortality, and all beyond them, mere dens of ignorance,) to crush all our prejudices at once, she was just come from a country school, where her very last act had been the representation of *Comus*. Here was a discovery! In the existing state of Miss R.'s fancy, she became convinced that Eliza M. owed not only her graceful carriage, and her fine elocution, but all her talents and accomplishments solely to the having sustained a part in this masque; and she instantly resolved to new-model all her pupils at a stroke in the same way. She immediately communicated her resolution to Eliza and myself, and left us to consult Mrs. S. on the subject. We remained together in high expectation, turning over Milton's exquisite poem, casting the parts, spouting, admiring, and I, between whiles, a little regretting that, though the very finest thing in the world in its way, *Comus* was not *Richard the Third*. The regret was unnecessary; we were not fated to act *Comus*. Miss R. returned from Mrs. S. with the appointed play, the only play which that worthy governess would hear of—the only play fit to be acted by young ladies—the *Search after Happiness*, a pastoral drama; and the respective idolaters of Milton and Shakspeare sat down to the perusal of Mrs. Hannah More. Do any of my readers know the piece? It is a dialogue in rhyme, moral, sensible, and well intentioned, but not very dramatic, and not pastoral at all. The story may be shortly told. Four fashionable young ladies,

sufficiently tired of themselves and of the world, go forth into the fields one fine morning to seek a venerable elderly lady, Urania by name, through whose wisdom they expect to be made immediately good and happy. They have the usual scenic good fortune of meeting with the only human being who could properly direct them, in the person of a certain young shepherdess, called Florella, a *protégée* of Urania, who leads them to her at once. She receives the distressed damsels kindly; hears their several confessions, not of sins but of propensities; for they have all, according to Pope's system, a "ruling passion;" gives them good advice and a breakfast; and the piece concludes. It had nearly come to an abrupt conclusion in our case. Critics of fifteen and sixteen are not remarkably tolerant: and Mrs. Hannah More, though a forcible prose writer, is, without offence be it spoken, no great poet; and measured with Milton—the Search after Happiness compared to Comus! Alas for poor Miss R.! within a quarter of an hour after assuming the managerial throne, she shared the fate of other managers,—her two principal actors threw up their parts. This fit of disgust was, however, rather violent than lasting. Our manager soothed and scolded, and reasoned and bribed; and we, after picking this "Pastoral Drama" to pieces as thoroughly as ever children picked a daisy, began to relent, listened to reason, and finally promised to try; a condescension to which we were induced, partly by the cogent argument that any play was better than none, and partly by the promise of real scenery, new dresses, and splendid decorations. The play was now generally announced; read with prodigious applause, (it seemed that we two had exhausted the critical carping;) and cast in proper form. Eliza accepted Urania, stipulating that the speeches should be a good deal shortened, especially in the didactic parts; and that the worthy lady should be made considerably younger. She declared that she would not even have acted Comus, if Comus had been an old woman; and, above all, she demanded that one expres-

sion, which particularly affronted her, "the goodly dame," should be transmuted into "gentle fair," or some such elegance. The four seekers after happiness were next to be disposed of: Cleora, the leader and talker of the party, fell to my share. This Cleora was a learned lady, a blue-stocking of the very first water, and if intended by the author, as I suppose it was, for a lesson, was sadly thrown away in the present instance. God knows there was small danger of my aspiring after too much knowledge! What a pity that Miss Julia, maker of notes, writer of short-hand, reporter of lectures, should have left school! She would have played Cleora to the life. She should have staid on purpose, and I dare say she would have staid, if she could have foreseen such an opportunity of exhibiting the universality of her genius. Next came "the fair Euphelia," a pretty vain coquettish character, which, in right of beauty, was consigned to our beautiful countess. What a mistake was that too! No one could look at the pure and lofty style of her countenance without being convinced that vanity was to her an impossible fault; proud she might be, vain she could not; one should as soon have suspected the Apollo Belvidere. The third lady errante, "the gentle Laurinda," was much better disposed of. Never was a part more felicitously cast. Our Laurinda was a fine, showy girl, tall, plump, inert and languishing, with a fair blooming complexion, light sleepy eyes, long flaxen hair, and general comely silliness of aspect. Her speech had a characteristic slowness, and indolent drawl, all her words dragged as it were, so that those who did not know her were apt to accuse her of affectation. Those who did, saw at once that she was a thoroughly well-meaning young person, with much good-humour and no want of sense, but with an entire absence of energy and application, a capacity of unlearning, a faculty of forgetting exactly suited to the part. She was, in short, the very Laurinda of the play.

Last of the quartet was Pastorella, a romantic nymph always in love. Truly she was well suited too; having fallen

to the lot of a very lovely girl, quite an Asiatic beauty, who, although not in the least addicted to any such silly pastime, had an oriental languor in her slow and graceful movements, and a depth of tenderness in her large black eyes, which gave a great verisimilitude to her representation of the lovelorn damsel. She was also an admirable musician, and Miss R. determined to call her sweet and passionate voice in aid of the illusion. So she was to sing some fervid Italian ditty to the accompaniment of her own harp, which would have just the proper sentimental air, (your romantic young lady always does accompany herself on the harp, especially out of doors,) and to be drest as much like the heroine of a novel as possible. Then came the shepherdess Florella. We had a charming Florella; a gentle, simple country girl, whose round, slender figure, her golden hair, blue eyes, and glowing complexion, her innocent voice, and engaging smile, might have suited

——“the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the green-sward.”——

She seemed born to wear little white hats wreathed with flowers, and jackets laced tightly to her small trim waist, to weave chaplets, tie up nosegays, and twist garlands round her crook.

Our *dramatis personæ* now wanted only the two daughters of Urania to be complete. These two daughters might almost have passed *pour des personnages muets*. They had scarcely ten lines between them; any body might have filled such parts, and yet the filling them nearly overset our play. They had been overlooked at first, being really too unimportant to attract attention, and remained for two or three days totally forgotten; till Zenobie, our clever dunce, and Charlotte, one of our managing Triad, (her sister Catherine was ill, or she would have manœuvred for all three,) took a fancy to act them, and immediately preferred a petition to that effect, which was readily granted. Nothing could equal the consternation of their mamma elect when she heard this

intelligence. To be a mamma at all was bad enough ; but to have one daughter taller than herself, and another, who, though not so tall, looked like an old fairy, was not to be endured. She flew to Miss R. Miss R. was sorry, but she had promised. She remonstrated, coaxed, argued, threatened, talked of resigning, did resign ; still no relaxation. The whole house was split into factions ; all who knew any thing of acting felt, with poor Urania, that the grouping required absolute children ; all who did not, sided with the popular favourites Zenobie and Charlotte. At last, after the manager's firmness and prima donna's obstinacy had been well tried, after one whole day of turmoil and suspense, Charlotte's good-humour decided the question. She prevailed on Zenobie to join her in withdrawing their request ; and Urania, well chidden for her presumption, penitent but triumphant, resumed her part, and at the end of a few days was even permitted to choose her children. And an excellent choice she made. Our sweet little Irish girl, the sometime Pizarro, who did every thing but grow, and at twelve years of age looked eight, as at eight she had wit enough for twelve, played the eldest daughter ; whilst a rosy, curly-pated, laughing brat of six, a perfect picture of a child, just like one of Sir Joshua's stepped down from the frame, lisped through the youngest to admiration. Nor were Charlotte and Zenobie forgotten. The three sisters formed a sort of chorus of shepherdesses in attendance on Florella, and sang and danced at the banquet ; whilst, at the end of their dance, Zenobie, exquisitely dressed, and armed with a superb garland of roses, darted forward and executed a *pas seul*. Such a *pas seul* ! The French dancing-master declared that nothing like it had ever been seen in England. It was the only part of our play that was encored.

And now we began to experience, in its fullest enchantment, the extraordinary power that acting possesses over the human fancy,—the total absorption, the artificial importance, the busy idleness ! The whole school was turned topsy turvy ;

nothing was thought of or talked of but our play ; there was an entire pause and intermission of all lessons, an universal holiday. Those who did not act in the drama were wanted to act audience ; and the making of paper flowers, the construction of pasteboard trellis-work, the painting and decorating of Urania's bower, the only part of the scenery which we managed at home, (all the rest was hired from a private theatre,) found full employment for little and great. The actresses were busy enough. Urania had her part to study and her dress ; or rather she had to reconcile these perplexing contradictions, to submit her decorations to the sedateness of her character, and to take away somewhat of age and gravity from her character to suit the elegance of her costume. Oh the coquetry of her point-lace cap ! and the profuse and graceful folds of fine Indian muslin in which she was enveloped ! She looked as much like a splendid young bride, and as little like a reduced elderly gentlewoman, as could be. Besides these weighty and opposing considerations, Urania undertook the charge of teaching her daughters and the shepherdess Florella ; and was extra officially employed in giving hints to all parties, from the harp mistress who composed our songs, down to the shoemaker who furnished our sandals,—from the manager rehearsing, down to Laurinda trying to learn. The fair Euphelia, too, had a double difficulty to encounter, her dignity and the *th*. Oh those terrible consonants ! she could manage all other English sounds. We changed every word we could ; but there was no dispensing with the *thes* and the *thats* ; so she was forced to go on *deing* and *datting* so prettily ! we scarcely wished to cure such an imperfection. Pastorella's cares were of a gentler sort. She was engaged in the pleasant task of selecting the tenderest Italian song, and the most romantic trimming that fashion would permit. With the first she was easily suited ; the last was rather a puzzle. First she fixed upon the heart's-ease, whose sentimental names, the *pensée*, and the love in idleness, rendered it peculiarly appro-

priate ; but the heart's-ease is a day-light flower ; its colours require the sun ; the yellow looks white and the purple black by candle-light ; so that was given up. Then she tried the lily of the valley ; that was too limp, and hung awkwardly ;—then sprigs of myrtle ; they were too stiff, and would not hang at all ; so that she was fain to lay aside her soft emblems, and content herself with oak leaves and acorns. My troubles lay in a different direction. At first I had inwardly grieved over the play, and the part, and the prologue, (which also fell to my lot,) as a sad waste of talent ; I had fallen into the pretty general error of mistaking the love of an art, for the power of excelling in it, and had longed to come out in Milton or Shakespeare. But I soon discovered, to the great improvement of my humility, that *The Search after Happiness* was only too good for me ; in short, that I was about as bad an actress as ever trod the stage. To be sure, I did know my speeches by rote, and I also understood the sense of them ; I could read the play decently enough ; but in acting I was really deplorable ; shame, and fear, and awkwardness had set their mark on me ; there was no breaking the spell. My hands and arms especially were intolerable burthens. I never knew what to do with them ; and should certainly have resigned in despair, but for the relief of a fan in the prologue, and a most comfortable promise from Florella, to pop a nosegay into my hand the moment she came on the scene. Nothing less could have reconciled me to remaining in the company. In proportion as I disappointed my own expectations, Urania exceeded them. She was indeed a consummate actress, in voice, person, manner, and expression. A pervading and indescribable grace, a fine quick intelligence, and a modest confidence, distinguished every word and motion. I was never weary of admiring her.—Perhaps I might almost have envied such powers in any one else ; but she was so kind-hearted, bore her faculties so meekly, was so ready to advise, and so eager to encourage and assist, that she quelled the evil spirit. She

seemed perfectly unconscious of her high superiority ; except the natural desire not to look too old, she never betrayed one spark of vanity through the whole piece.

At last, after a whole month's busy preparation, the great day arrived, luckily one of the shortest in December ; for such a day of confusion, and unrest, and useless bustle, I never encountered before or since. From sunrise to sunset we were all running after we knew not what, talking, spouting, singing, laughing, or crying, without a moment's intermission. My particular exercise was practising the circular curtsy, which I had been taught to make as prologue ; I curtsied till I could hardly stand. Of course we had plenty of vexations, besides those which we chose to cultivate for our private diversion. First of all the sandals were not finished. In spite of three several messages to the faithless shoemaker, the sandals never made their appearance till just half an hour after the shepherdesses had accomplished their dance in slippers. The fancy dresses of Urania's daughters never came at all ; they were forced to play in white frocks. Then the decorations that did arrive, contrived to be almost as provoking as those that did not. A stupid milliner sent Euphelia a sky-blue plume to wear with her pink robe ! Pastorella's new stays were two inches too large ; Florella's jacket was three inches too small ; and the green curtain a quarter of a yard too short. There was no end to the letting down, the letting out, and the taking in, of that disastrous day. But the most perplexing of all our perplexities was occasioned by the innocent but unfortunate Laurinda. She had no mother, and was to be furnished with a splendid dress by her father's sister, Viscountess A. We were anxiously looking out for the expected parcel, the lady aunt being in the country, when a letter which arrived by post spread a general consternation and dismay. This letter, addressed to Laurinda, franked by the viscount, signed by the viscountess, and written by her maid, announced that the promised dress would be sent by the coach

on Thursday, and they hoped would fit and please the intended wearer. Thursday! and this "the great, the important day," was Tuesday! Here was a calamity! We examined the letter again and again, spelt the word over and over, there it was plain and clear, T, h, u, the next letter was rather uncertain, it looked most like an r, but it might have passed for an e, without a loop, or an i, without a tittle. The Th was there as legible as copper-plate, and never did those two letters give greater perturbation to our dear countess, than to us the committee of management. One of us, however, on a closer perusal of the letter, found that "pleased" was spelt "plased," and, on examining Laurinda, we further discovered that the waiting gentlewoman was Irish. It might therefore be purely an error in spelling, arising from a vicious pronunciation. But this conjecture was considered as rather super-subtle, and at all events we could not comfortably rely even on a *femme-de-chambre's* false spelling. So we held a council on the case, and had just resolved to omit the character altogether, when the paraphernalia arrived, and restored the fair wearer to the honours of the play-bill. Such a dress was worth a little fright; it was equally superb and becoming: she looked like a peeress in that magnificent birth-day suit; and within a few months she actually became one;—the earliest and best married of all our company was the gentle Laurinda.

At last the long and arduous duties of the tiring-room were over; and plumed, and trained, and spangled, pearl-powdered, or rouged, as fear and novelty made us look red or pale, we were safely escorted behind the green curtain, and left there by our manager, who resolved herself to join the company. Our theatre was a lofty spacious saloon, built after the house was erected, for the purpose of a dancing-room. It was well adapted to our present object, as it opened into another apartment by large folding doors; and the two together accommodated a very numerous and elegant audience. We behind the curtain had no way of communicating with the rest of the

house except through a window, which looked from a considerable height into the garden. A ladder was placed at the window, and a maid servant stood within, and the gardener without, to perform any service that we might require. Miss R. had been much pleased with this temporary non-intercourse, this secure caging of her little birds ; it was such an assurance of their not flying away, of which, in one instance at least, the danger had seemed imminent. She did not foresee the calamity that awaited us. Just as the company were entering, and our orchestra beginning a grand concerto, Pastorella, who had succeeded in taking in her stays till she could scarcely breathe in them, between fright and tight lacing, fainted away, and water was immediately called for. The gardener, whose ideas appear to have been rather professional, immediately handed up an enormous watering-pot, brimfull of the pure element, which the housemaid was carrying to the fainting lady, when Miss Jane, darting along with her usual officiousness, and more than her usual speed, in search of a bottle of sal volatile, threw poor Pastorella's own harp right against the well-loaded housemaid, and housemaid, harp, and watering pot, all fell together in the middle of the stage. The crash was startling ; and our manager jumped over the foot lamps to investigate the cause. She found the sick damsel roused by the shock in time to save her laces, and very wisely engaged in washing off her rouge and relieving her heart by a plentiful shower of tears. Housemaid and harp, too, had been picked up unhurt ; but the watering-pot was rolling about the stage, and the stage was floated, absolutely under water. The actresses were scudding about to the dry places, full of care for their silks and satins, some clinging to the bower, others climbing the side-scenes, perched amidst boughs and branches, and in great danger of bringing the whole forest about our ears. It was no time for scolding ; so the whole chain of delinquents, from the gardener to Miss Jane, escaped unchidden ; it was more "germane to the matter" to send for cloths

and mops and warming-pans, and more housemaids, and get the stage dry as soon as possible. The cold water had done us all good; it had diverted our thoughts. Even I, in the midst of my tribulation, forgot for a moment that I was to speak the prologue and to open the play;—alas! only for a moment! Our manager rejoined the company, the curtain drew up, and I advanced to make the famous curtsy, with just such a courage as a coward may assume, who is placed in the van in battle and cannot run away,—the desperate courage of fear. I think I can feel my heart beat now. There was no need of such palpitations. The audience came to be indulgent, and they were so. The prologue went off well; and the play on the whole still better. I have not left room for particular accidents—and how one scene would not go back, or another come forward:—how Laurinda was stranded, and Urania helped her off:—how Pastorella's harp was untuned by the fall and her voice by the crying, and how that untuneable song and the oak-leaf trimming won the heart of, a young post captain, now her happy spouse:—how Florella forgot her crook, and Cleora walked through her train: these with other notable incidents, must remain untold. Suffice it that Euphelia's beauty, Urania's acting, and Zenobie's dancing bore the bell; and that after them, papas and uncles and grandpapas admired each his own.

Years have passed, and that blooming company is scattered far and wide. Some are married; some are dead. But whenever a happy chance throws two or three of us together, the English teacher and her favourite play are sure to be amongst the first, the gayest, and the tenderest of our school-day recollections.

FRENCH EMIGRANTS.

DURING the time that I spent at school I was in the habit of passing the interval, from Saturday afternoon to Monday

morning, at the house of a female relative who resided in London. This lady had married a French emigrant of high family, who, being a man of sense and ability, applied himself with diligence to mercantile pursuits, dropped his title, anglicised his name and habits, and, by dint of his own talents and his wife's fortune, soon became a thriving man on 'Change. I believe he would have been very sorry to exchange his new station for his old, his credit at Lloyd's for his marquisate, his hours in Brunswick-square for his Norman chateau, or his little wife for any thing. He was become at all points an Englishman, ate roast-beef and plum-pudding with a truly national relish, drank Port wine and porter, spoke our language almost like a native, read Pope, talked of Shakspeare, and pretended to read Milton. Could complaisance go further?

He did not, however, in his love for his adopted country, forget that in which he was born: still less did he neglect the friends and countrymen who, less fortunate than himself, languished in London and the suburbs in a miserable and apparently hopeless poverty. Nothing could exceed the kindness and politeness with which all whom he had ever known, and many who were now first introduced to him, were received by himself and his good little wife at their hospitable table. Seldom a day passed without one or more guests dropping in, sure of the most cordial welcome; but Saturday was the regular French day; on that day there was always a *petit souper* for Mr. S.'s especial coterie; and in the evening the conversation, music, games, manners, and cookery, were studiously and decidedly French. Trictrac superseded chess or backgammon, reversi took the place of whist, Gretry of Mozart, Racine of Shakspeare; omelettes and salads, Champagne moussu, and *eau sucré*, excluded sandwiches, oysters, and porter.

At these suppers their little school-girl visitor of course assisted, though at first rather in the French than the English sense of the word. I was present indeed, but had as little to

do as possible either with speaking or eating. To talk French and to discuss French dishes (two evils which I constantly classed together) seemed to me an actual insult on that glorious piece of British freedom, a half-holiday,—a positive attack on the liberty of the subject. Accordingly, as far as a constant repetition of blushing noes (not *nons*) inwardly angry and outwardly shy, could proclaim my displeasure, I did not fail. Luckily the sentiment was entirely unsuspected by every one but my good cousin, a person of admirable sense, who by dint of practising the let-alone system, (the best system of all when a prejudice is to be overcome,) aided by a little innocent artifice on her part, and something of latent curiosity, abetted by the keenness of a girlish appetite, on mine, succeeded in passing off a slice of a superb *tête du sanglier* for a new sort of Oxford brawn; and then, as in the matter of heads and suppers *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, left it to my own senses to discover the merits of brioche and marrangles and eau de groseille. In less than three months I became an efficient consumer of good things, left off my noes and my sulkiness, and said “oui, monsieur,” and, “merci, madame,” as often as a little girl of twelve years old ought to say any thing.

I confess, however, that it took more time to reconcile me to the party round the table, than to the viands with which it was covered. In truth they formed a motley group, reminding me now of a masquerade and then of a puppet-show; and, although I had been brought up in habits of proper respect for rank, and age, and poverty, yet there were contrasts and combinations about these coteries too ludicrous not to strike irresistibly the fancy of an acute observing girl, whose perception of the ridiculous was rendered keener by an invincible shyness which confined the enjoyment entirely to her own breast. The etiquette, the rouge, the coquetry, the self-importance of those poor draggleduchesses and countesses; the buttoned-up crosses, the bows and shrugs of their out-at-

elbow dukes and counts ; their mutual flatteries, their court jealousies and court hatreds, buttoned up like the crosses, but like them peeping out from the breast, the total oblivion which pervaded the whole party of poor England and all its concerns, the manner in which they formed a little nation in the midst of London, and the comfortable vanity which thought and called that little circle of emigrants the great nation ; all this, together with the astounding rapidity and clatter of tongues, the vehemence of gesticulation, and the general sharp and withered look of so many foreign faces, working in every variety of strong expression, formed a picture so new and amusing, that I may be pardoned if I did not at first fully appreciate the good-humoured resignation, the cheerful philosophy, which bore all that they had lost so well, and found so much comfort in the little that remained ; the happy art of making the best of things, which rendered even their personal vanity harmless, their pride in a lost station, and their love of a country which they might never see again, pleasant and respectable.

At first I only looked on them in the group ; but I soon learned to individualize the more constant visitors, those who had been ten years before accustomed to spend their evenings in the superb hotel of the Duchesse d'***, glittering with gilding and lined with mirrors, and whose gayest and most splendid meetings were now held in the plain undecorated drawing-room of a substantial merchant in Brunswick-square. I shall attempt to sketch a few of them as they then appeared to me, beginning, as etiquette demands, with the duchess.

She was a tall meagre woman, of a certain age, (that is to say, on the wrong side of sixty,) with the peculiarly bad unsteady walk, something between a trip and a totter, that Frenchwomen of rank used to acquire from their high heels and the habit of never using their feet. Her face bore the remains of beauty, and would still have been handsome, had not the thin cheeks and hollow eyes, and the pale trembling

lips, being contrasted almost to ghastliness by a quantity of glaring rouge, and very white teeth, constantly displayed by a smile originally perhaps artificial, but which long habit had rendered natural. Her dress was always simple in its materials, and delicately clean. She meant the fashion to be English, I believe,—at least she used often to say “*me voilà mise à l’Angloise ;*” but, as neither herself, nor her faithful *femme de chambre*, could or would condescend to seek for patterns from *les grosses bourgeoises de ce Londres là bas*, they unconsciously relapsed into the old French shapes : and madame la duchesse, in her hideous shrouding cap, with frills like flounces, and her long-waisted pigeon-breasted gown, might really have served for a model of the fashion of Paris at the epoch of the emigration. Notwithstanding these take-offs, our good duchess had still the air of a lady of rank, and a gentlewoman,—a French gentlewoman ; for there was too much coquetry and affectation, too pervading a consciousness, for English gentility. Her manner was very pleasant and affable towards her usual associates, and with strangers condescending, protecting, gracious ; making remarks and asking questions without waiting for answers, in the manner usual with crowned heads. She had contracted this habit from having at one time of her life enjoyed great influence at court,—an influence which, with her other advantage of rank and fortune, had been used so kindly as to retain friends and secure gratitude even in the heat of the Revolution.—Most amply did she repay this gratitude. It was beautiful to hear the ardent thankfulness with which she would relate the story of her escape, and the instances of goodness and devotion which met her at every step. She accounted herself the most fortunate of women, for having, in company with a faithful *femme de chambre*, at last contrived to reach England with jewels enough concealed about their persons to purchase an annuity sufficient to secure them a snug apartment up two pair of stairs in a retired street, and to keep them in soups and

salad, with rouge and snuff into the bargain. No small part of her good fortune was the vicinity of her old friend the Marquis L., a little thin withered old man with a prodigious mobility of shoulders and features, a face puckered with wrinkles, and prodigious volubility of tongue. This gentleman had been madame's devoted beau for the last forty years ; —I speak it in all honour, for, beautiful as she had been, the breath of scandal never glanced on the fair fame of the duchess. They could not exist without an interchange of looks and sentiments, a mutual intelligence, a gentle gallantry on the one side, and a languishing listening on the other, which long habit had rendered as necessary to both as their snuff-box or their coffee. It really was a peculiar stroke of good fortune that, after a separation of eight months, each fearing that the other had fallen by the guillotine, caused them to take lodgings in adjoining streets in the same parish.

The next person in importance to the duchess was Madame de V., sister to the marquis. Perhaps (though she had never filled a tabouret at Versailles *) she was, in the existing state of things, rather the greater lady of the two. Her husband, who had acted in a diplomatic capacity in the stormy days preceding the Revolution, still maintained his station at the exiled court, and was, at the moment of which I write, employed on a secret embassy to an unnamed potentate ; some thought one emperor or king, some another, some guessed the pope, and some the grand seignor ; for, in the dearth of Bourbon news, this mysterious mission excited a lively and animated curiosity amongst these sprightly people. It was a pretty puzzle for them, a conundrum to their taste. Madame kept the secret well,—if she knew it. I rather suspect she did not ; she talked so very much that it certainly would have escaped her. In person she was quite a contrast to the duchess ; short, very crooked, with the sharp odd-looking face

* A privilege annexed to the rank of duchess ; that of being seated in the royal presence.

and keen eye that so often accompany deformity. She added to these good gifts a prodigious quantity of rouge and finery, mingling ribands, feathers, and beads of all the colours of the rainbow, with as little scruple as a *belle* of the South Seas would discover in the choice of her decorations. She was on excellent terms with all who knew her, unless perhaps there might be a little jealousy of station between her and the duchess, who had no great affection for one who seemed likely "to push her from her stool." She was also on the best possible terms with herself, in spite of the looking-glass, whose testimony, indeed, was so positively contradicted by certain couplets and acrostics addressed to her by M. le Comte de C., and the Chevalier des I., the poets of the party, that to believe one uncivil dumb thing against two witnesses of such undoubted honour, would have been a breach of politeness of which madame was incapable. Notwithstanding this piece of womanly blindness, she was an excellent person, a good sister, good mother, and good wife.

Of the Comte de C. I shall say nothing, except that he was a poet, and the most remarkable individual of the party, being more like a personification of a German play than a living man of flesh and blood. His contradictions and oddities quite posed me at the ripe age of twelve ; but the gentleman was a poet, and that, as poor madame used to say, accounts for every thing.

His wife was just such a person as Rubens has often painted, tall, large, and finely complexioned. She would have been very handsome but for one terrible drawback ;—she squinted ; not much, not glaringly ; it was a very little squint, the least in the world, but a squint it certainly was, quite enough to diminish the lustre of her beauty. Even when from the position of her face we happened not to see it, the consciousness that there it was, broke the charm. I cannot abide these "cross-eyes," as the country people call them ; though I have heard of ladies who, from the spirit of partisanship, admired

those of Mr. Wilkes. The French gentlemen did not seem to participate in my antipathy ; for the countess was regarded as the beauty of the party. Agreeable she certainly was, lively, witty, abounding in repartee and innocent mischief, playing off a variety of amusing follies herself, and bearing with great philosophy the eccentricities of her husband. She had also an agreeable little dog called *Amour*, a pug, the smallest and ugliest of the species, who regularly after supper used to jump out of the muff, where he had lain perdu all the evening, and make the round of the supper-table, begging cake and biscuits. He and I had established a great friendship ; he regularly, after levying his contributions all round, came to me for a game at play, and sometimes carried his partiality so far, as, on hearing my voice, to pop his poor little black nose out of his hiding place before the appointed time. It required several repetitions of *Fi donc* from his mistress to drive him back behind the scenes till she gave him his cue.

No uncommon object of her wit was the mania of a smug and smooth-faced little abbé, the politician *par eminence*, where all were politicians, just as Madame de V. was the talker amongst a tribe of talkers. M. l'Abbé must have been an exceeding bore to our English ministers, whom by his own showing he pestered weekly with laboured memorials,—plans for a rising in La Vendée, schemes for an invasion, proposals to destroy the French fleet, offers to take Antwerp, and plots for carrying off Buonaparte from the opera-house, and lodging him in the Tower of London. This last was his favourite project ; and well it might be, for a bolder idea never entered the mind of man. Imagine the abduction of the emperor, in the midst of his court and guards, and his good city of Paris ! Fancy him carried off by the unassisted prowess and dexterity of M. l'Abbé, and deposited in the Tower, like a piece of old armour, or a lion newly caught, whilst all France was staring and running about in search of her ruler, like the Harlowe family after the *enlèvement* of Miss Clarissa ! What

a master-stroke would this have been ! Ministers, as he used to complain, refused to avail themselves of this brilliant idea, thereby prolonging the war, and incurring a needless waste of lives and treasure. Indeed any little misfortune that befell our government, the sinking of an East-Indiaman, the failure of an expedition, or the loss of a motion, was commonly ascribed by him to the neglect of his advice ; whilst, on the other hand, any eminent success in the cabinet, the parliament, or the field, was pretty sure to be traced up by him to some one of his numerous suggestions. Of the victory at Trafalgar, for instance, we English people have generally attributed the merit to the great commander who fell in the fight ; but (I do not exactly remember on what score) he claimed full half of the honour ; and doubtless he ascribes the campaigns in Spain, the frost in Russia, the burning of Moscow, the capture of Paris, the crowning victory at Waterloo, and the restoration and establishment of the Bourbons, in a great measure, if not wholly, to the effect of his counsels. I would lay a wager that he is at this moment wasting reams of paper in memorializing the French government on this subject, as well as favouring them with hints on any other that falls in his way. In the matter of advice and projects his liberality is unbounded. He alone, of all the Brunswick-square coterie, condescended to bestow the slightest attention on English affairs, and had the goodness to apply himself with unfeigned earnestness to the improvement of our condition. Thus, whilst one pocket was filled with proposals to cut off the French army, and schemes to blow up the Tuilleries, (for though one of the most benevolent and mild-tempered men on earth, he was a perfect Guy Vaux on paper,) the other was crammed with plans to pay off the national debt, thoughts on the commutation of tithes, and hints for a general enclosure bill. He had usually some little private projects too, and many an unwary fellow-speculator hath rued his patents for making coals better than those of Newcastle out of dirt and ashes, his improved Argand

lamps, and self-working fishing-nets. In short, he was a thorough projector, one that "never was, but always to be," rich; quick, imaginative, plausible, eloquent, and the more dangerous because he was thoroughly honest, and had himself an entire faith in one scheme, till it was chased away by another,—a bubble like the rest!

Then came the Chevalier des I.—

"By my life,
That Davies hath a mighty pretty wife!"

The chevalier was a handsome man himself, tall, dark-visaged and whiskered, with a look rather of the new than of the old French school, fierce and soldierly; he was accomplished, too, in his way, played the flute, and wrote songs and enigmas; but his wife was undoubtedly the most remarkable thing belonging to him; not that she was a beauty either; I should rather call her the prettiest of pretty women; she was short, well-made, with fine black eyes, long glossy black hair, a clear brown complexion, a cocked-up nose, red lips, white teeth, and a most bewitching dimple. There was a tasteful smartness in her dress, which with a *gentillesse* in her air, and a piquancy of expression, at once told her country, and gave a promise of intelligence and feeling. No one could look at her without being persuaded that she was equally sensible and lively; but no one could listen to her without discovering the mistake. She was the silliest Frenchwoman I ever encountered,—I have met with some as stupid among my own countrywomen; Heaven forbid that we should in any thing yield the palm to our neighbours! She never opened her lips without uttering some *bêtise*. Her poor husband, himself not the wisest of men, quite dreaded her speaking; for, besides that he was really fond of her, he knew that the high-born circle of which she formed a part, would be particularly on the watch for her mistakes, as she was *roturière*, the daughter of a farmer-general, who had fallen a sacrifice to

the inhuman tyranny of Robespierre, leaving her no dower but her beauty. She was a most innocent and kind-hearted person, and devotedly attached to her husband; and yet his bitterest enemy could hardly have contrived to say more provoking things to and of him than she did in her fondness. I will give one instance; I might give fifty.

L'Abbé de Lille, the celebrated French poet, and M. de Calonne, the no less noted ex-minister, had promised one Saturday to join the party in Brunswick-square. They came; and our chevalier, who had a tolerable opinion of his own powers as a verse-maker, could not miss so fair an opportunity of display. Accordingly, about half an hour before supper, he put on a look of *distraction*, strode hastily two or three times up and down the room, slapped his forehead, and muttered a line or two to himself; then calling hastily for pen and paper, began writing with the illegible rapidity of one who fears to lose a happy thought, a life-and-death kind of speed; then stopped a moment, as pausing for a word, then went on again fast, fast; then read the lines, or seemed to read; then made a slight alteration;—in short, he acted incomparably the whole agony of composition, and finally, with becoming diffidence, presented the impromptu to our worthy host, who immediately imparted it to the company. It was heard with the lively approbation with which verses of compliment, read aloud in presence of the author and of the parties complimented, are sure to be received; and really, as far as I remember, the lines were very neatly turned. At last the commerce of flattery ceased. Bows, speeches, blushes, and apologies were over; the author's excuses, the ex-minister's and the great poet's thanks, and the applause of the audience, died away; all that could be said about the impromptu was exhausted, the topic was fairly worn out, and a pause ensued, which was broken by Madame des L., who had witnessed the whole scene with intense pleasure, and now exclaimed, with tears standing in her beautiful eyes, "How

glad I am they like the impromptu ! My poor dear chevalier ! No tongue can tell what pains it has cost him ! There he was all yesterday evening, writing, writing,—all the night long—never went to bed,—all to-day—only finished just before we came.—My poor dear chevalier ! I should have been so sorry if they had not liked his impromptu ! Now he 'll be satisfied." Be it recorded to the honour of French politeness, that, finding it impossible to stop or to out-talk her, (both which experiments were tried,) the whole party pretended not to hear, and never once alluded to this impromptu *fait à loisir*, till the discomfited chevalier sneaked off with his pretty simpleton, smiling and lovely as ever, and wholly unconscious of offence. Then, to be sure, they did laugh.

I have committed a great breach of etiquette in mentioning the chevalier and his lady before the Baron de G. and his daughter Angelique. I question if the baron would forgive me ; for he was of Alsace, and, though he called himself French, had German blood and quarterings, and pride enough for a prince of the empire. He was a fine-looking man of fifty, tall, upright, and active, and still giving tokens of having been in his youth one of the handsomest figures and best dancers at Versailles. He was the least gay of the party, perhaps the least happy ; for his pride kept him in a state of prickly defiance against all mankind. He had the miserable jealousy of poverty, of one " fallen from his high estate," suspected insults where they were never dreamed of, and sifted civility, to see whether an affront, a lurking snake, might be concealed beneath the roses. The smallest and most authorized present, even fruit and game, were peremptorily rejected ; and, if he accepted the Saturday evening's invitation, it was evidently because he could not find in his heart to refuse a pleasure to his daughter. Angelique was, indeed, a charming creature, fair, blooming, modest, and gentle, far more English than French in person, manner, and dress, doting on her father, soothing his little infirmities of temper, and ministering in

every way to his comfort and happiness. Never did a father and a daughter love each other better ; and that is saying much. He repaid her care and affection with the most unbounded fondness, and a liberality that had no limit but his power. Mademoiselle de G. was the best dressed, best lodged, and best attended of any lady of the circle. The only wonder was how the baron could afford it. Every one else had some visible resource, of which they were so little ashamed, that it was as freely communicated as any news of the day. We all knew that the ambassadress and her brother the marquis lived together on a small pension allotted to the lady by a foreign court, in reward of certain imputed services rendered to the Bourbons by her husband ; that the count taught French, Latin, and Italian ; that the abbé contrived in some way or other to make his projects keep him ; and that the pretty wife of the chevalier, more learned in bonnets than in impromptus, kept a very tasty and well-accustomed milliner's shop some where in the region of Cranbourne-alley : but the baron's means of support continued as much a puzzle as the ambassador's destination. At last chance let me into the secret. Our English dancing-master waxed old and rich, and retired from the profession ; and our worthy governess vaunted loudly of the French gentleman whom she had engaged as his successor, and of the reform that would be worked in the heads and heels of her pupils, grown heavy and lumpish under the late instructor. The new master arrived ; and, whilst a boy who accompanied him was tuning his kit, and he himself paying his respects to the governess, I had no difficulty in discovering, under a common French name, my acquaintance the baron. The recognition was mutual. I shall never forget the start he gave, when, in the middle of the first cotillon, he espied the little girl whom he had been used to see at the corner of the supper-table in Brunswick-square every Saturday evening. He coloured with shame and anger, his hand trembled, and his voice faltered ; but as he would not know me, I had

the discretion not to appear to know him, and said nothing of the affair till I again visited my kind cousin. I never saw any one more affected than she was on hearing my story. That this cold, proud, haughty man, to whom any thing that savoured of humiliation seemed terrible, should so far abase his nobility for Angelique and independence, was wonderful ! She could not refrain from telling her husband, but the secret was carefully guarded from every one besides ; and, except that they showed him an involuntary increase of respect, and that I could not help drawing myself up, and sitting rather more upright than ordinary, when he happened to look at me, nothing indicated any suspicion of the circumstance.

In the mean time the fair Angelique, who was treated with the customary disregard shown to unmarried beauties by her countrymen, (whose devoirs the old duchess, the crooked ambassadress, and the squinting countess, entirely engrossed,) was gradually making an English conquest of no small importance. The eldest son of a rich merchant, who had been connected with our host in several successful speculations, and was exceedingly intimate with the family, begged to be admitted to the Saturday evening coterie. His request was readily granted ; he came at first from curiosity, but that feeling was soon exchanged for a deeper and a more tender passion ; and at last he ventured to disclose his love, first to the lady of his heart, and then to their mutual friend. Neither frowned on the intelligence, although both apprehended some difficulties. How would the baron look on a man who could hardly trace his ancestors further back than his grandfather ? And how again would these rich citizens, equally proud in a different way, relish an alliance with a man who, however highly descended, was neither more nor less than a dancing-master ? But pride melts before love, like frost in the sunshine. All parties were good and kind, all obstacles were overcome, and all faults forgotten. The rich merchant forgave the baron's poverty, and the baron (which was more difficult) forgave his wealth. The

calling, which had only been followed for Angelique's sake, was for her sake abandoned ; the fond father consented to reside with her : and surrounded by her lovely family, freed from poverty and its distressing consciousness, and from all the evils of false shame, he has long been one of the happiest, as he was always one of the best, of French emigrants.

MY GODFATHER.

It is now nearly twenty years ago, that I, a young girl just freed from the trammels of schooldom, went into a remote and distant county, on a visit to my godfather, to make acquaintance with a large colony of my relations, and behold new scenes and new faces ; a pleasure, certainly ; but a formidable and awful pleasure to a shy and home-loving girl. Nothing could have reconciled me to the prospect of encountering so many strange cousins, for they were all strangers, but my strong desire to see my dear and venerable godpapa, for whom, although we had never met since the christening, I entertained the most lively affection,—an affection nourished on his part by kindnesses of every sort, from the huge wax-doll and the letter in print-hand, proper to the damsel of six years old, down to the pretty verses and elegant necklace, his birth-day greeting to the young lady of sixteen. He was no stranger, that dear godpapa ! I was quite sure I should know him at first sight, quite sure that I should love him better than ever ; both which predictions were verified to the letter. It would have been strange indeed if they had not.

Mr. Evelyn, for so I shall call him, was a gentleman of an ancient family and considerable fortune, residing in a small town in the north of England ; where he had occupied, for the last fifty years, the best house, and the highest station, the object of universal respect and affection, from high and low. He was that beautiful thing, a healthy and happy old man.

Shakspeare, the master painter, has partly described him for me, in the words of old Adam,—

“ Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly.”

Never was wintry day, with the sun smiling upon the icicles, so bright or so keen. At eighty-four, he had an unbent, vigorous person, a fresh colour, long, curling, milk-white hair, and regular features, lighted up by eyes as brilliant and as piercing as those of a hawk; his foot was as light, his voice as clear, and his speech as joyous as at twenty. He had a life of mind, an alertness of spirit, a brilliant and unfading hilarity, which were to him like the quick blood of youth. Time had been rather his friend than his foe; had stolen nothing as far as I could discover; and had given such a licence to his jokes and his humour, that he was, when I knew him, as privileged a person as a court jester in the days of yore. Perhaps he was always so: for, independently of fortune and station, high animal spirits, invincible good-humour, and a certain bustling officiousness, are pretty sure to make their way in the world, especially when they seek only for petty distinctions. He was always the first personage of his small circle; president of half the clubs in the neighbourhood; steward to the races; chairman of the bench; father of the corporation; and would undoubtedly have been member for the town, if that ancient borough had not had the ill luck to be disfranchised in some stormy period of our national history.

But that was no great loss to my dear godfather. Even the bench and the vestry, although he presided at them with sufficient reputation, were too grave matters to suit his taste. He would have made a bad police magistrate; his sympathies ran directly the contrary way. Accordingly he used to be accused of certain merciful abuses of his office of justice of the peace; such as winking at vagrants and vagabonds, encouraging the Merry Andrew and the droll fellow Punch,

and feeling the constable, *not* to take up a certain drunken fiddler, who had haunted the town, man and boy, these forty years.

Races and balls were more his element. There he would walk about with his hands behind him, and a pleasant word for every one; his keen eye sparkling with gaiety, and his chuckling laugh heard above all, the unwearied patron and promoter of festivity in all its branches; rather than the dance should languish, he would stand up himself. This indulgence to the young, or rather this sympathy with enjoyment wherever he found it, was not confined to the rich; he liked a fair or a revel quite as well as an assembly, perhaps better, because the merriment there was noisier, heartier, more completely free from restraint. How he would chuck the rosy country lasses under the chin, and question them about their sweethearts! And how the little coquettes would smile, and blush, and curtsy, and cry "fie," and enjoy it! That was certainly an octogenarian privilege, and one worth a score or two of years, in his estimation.

But these diversions, thoroughly as he entered into their spirit, were by no means necessary to his individual amusement. His cheerfulness needed no external stimuli. The day was too short—life itself, although so prolonged, was too brief for his busy idleness. He had nothing to do, followed no calling, belonged to no profession, had no estate to improve, no children to establish, and yet from morning to night he was employed about some vagary or other, with as much ardour as if the fate of the nation depended on his speed. Fishing and fiddling, shooting and coursing, turning and varnishing, making bird-cages, and picture-frames, and cabbage-nets, and flies for angling, constructing charades, and tagging verses, were only a few of his occupations. Then he dallied with science and flirted with art; was in a small way a connoisseur, had a tolerable collection of prints, and a very bad one of paintings, and was moreover a sort of virtuoso. I had not

been two days in the house before my good godfather introduced me to his museum, a long room, or rather gallery, where, as he boasted, and I well believe, neither mop, nor broom, nor housemaid, had ever entered.

This museum was certainly the dirtiest den into which I ever set foot; dark, to a pitch which took away for a while all power of distinguishing objects, and so dusty as to annihilate colour, and confuse form. I have a slight notion that this indistinctness was, in the present instance, rather favourable than otherwise to the collection, which I cannot help suspecting was a thought less valuable than its owner opined. It consisted, I believe, (for one cannot be very sure,) of sundry birds in glass cases, exceedingly ragged and dingy; of sundry stuffed beasts, among which the moth had made great havoc; of sundry reptiles, and other curiosities, preserved, pickled—(what is the proper word?)—in glass bottles; of a great heap of ores, and shells, and spars, covered with cobwebs; of some copper coins, all rust; of half a mummy; and a bit of cloth made of asbestos. The only time I ever got into a scrape with my good-humoured host was on the score of this last-mentioned treasure. Being assured by him that it was the veritable undoubted asbestos, which not only resists the action of fire, but is actually cleansed by that element, I proposed, seeing how very much it needed purification, that it should undergo a fiery ablution forthwith; but that ordeal was rejected as too dangerous; and I myself certainly considered for five minutes as dangerous too—something of an incendiary, a female Guy Vaux—I was lucky enough to do away the impression by admiring, very honestly, some newly-caught butterflies,—pretty insects, and not yet spoiled,—which occupied one side of a long table. They were backed, to my great consternation, by a row of skulls, which, Mr. Evelyn having lately met with Dr. Gall's book, and being much smitten with *Cranio*—I beg its new name's pardon—*Phrenology*—had purchased, at five shillings a head, of the

sexton, and now descanted on in a vein as unlike Hamlet's as possible.

The museum was hung round with festoons of birds' eggs, strung necklace-fashion, as boys are wont to thread them, being the part of its contents which, next perhaps to his new playthings the skulls, its owner valued most. Indeed they had an additional charm in his eyes, by being mostly the trophies of his own exploits from childhood downwards. Bird-nesting, always his favourite sport, had been, since he had dabbled in natural history, invested with the dignity of a pursuit. He loved it as well as any child in the parish ; had as keen an eye to his game, and as much intrepidity in its acquisition ; climbed trees, delved into hedgerows, and no more minded a rent garment, or a tumble into a ditch, than an urchin of eight years old. The butterflies too were, for the most part, of his own catching. I have myself seen a chase after a moth, that might serve as a companion to that grand Peter-Pindaric, " Sir Joseph Banks and the emperor of Morocco," but my godfather had the better of the sport, he knocked down *his* insect.

To return to our museum. The last article that I remember, was a prodigious bundle of autographs, particularly unselect ; where Thomas Smith, date unknown, figured by the side of Oliver Cromwell, and John Brown, equally incognito, had the honour of being tied up with Queen Elizabeth. I would not be very certain either that there might not be an occasional forgery among the greater names ; not on the part of the possessor, he would as soon have thought of forging a bank bill, but on that of the several venders, or donors, which last class generally came, autograph in hand, to beg a favour. Never was any human being so complete a subject for imposition—so entirely devoid of guile himself, so utterly unsuspecting of its existence in others. He lived as if there were not a lie in the world ;—blessed result of a frank and ardent temperament, and of a memory so happily constituted that it retained no more trace of past evil, than of last year's clouds.

His living collection was quite as large, and almost as out of the way, as his dead one. He was an eminent bird-fancier, and had all sorts of "smale foule's," as old Chaucer calls them, in every variety of combination, and in different stages of education; for your professed bird-fancier, like your professed florist, is seldom content to let nature alone. Starlings, jays, and magpies, learning to talk; bullfinches and goldfinches learning tunes from a barrel organ; linnets brought up under a wood-lark, unlearning their own notes and studying his; nightingales, some of the earliest known in those parts, learning to live north of Trent; all sorts of canaries, and mule birds, and nests full of young things not yet distinguishable from each other, made up the miscellaneous contents of his aviary. He had also some white mice, a tame squirrel, and a very sagacious hedge-hog; and he had had a tortoise, which, by an extraordinary exertion of ingenuity, he had contrived to kill,—a feat, which a road waggon going over the poor animal would have failed to perform. This was the manner. The tortoise, as most people know, is for about six months in the year torpid, and generally retires under ground to enjoy his half year's nap: he had been missing some days, when the old gardener dug him out of a cabbage bed, and brought him in for dead. My godfather, forgetting his protégé's habits, and just fresh from reading some book on the efficacy of the warm bath, (he was a great man for specifics,) soused the unlucky land-crab into hot water, and killed him outright. All that could be done to repair the mischief was tried, and he was finally replaced in his old burrow, the cabbage bed, but even burying him failed to bring him to life again. This misadventure rather damped Mr. Evelyn's zest for outlandish favourites. After all, his real and abiding pets were children—children of all ages, from six months old to twelve years. He had much of the child in his own composition; his sweet and simple nature, his restlessness and merri-ment, harmonized with theirs most completely. He loved a

game at romps too, as well as they did, and would join in all their sports, from battledore and shuttlecock to puss in the corner. He had no child of his own—(have I not said that he was married?)—no child whom he had an absolute right to spoil; but he made all the children of the place serve his turn, and right happy were they to be spoiled by Mr. Evelyn.

They all flocked around him, guided by that remarkable instinct, by which the veriest baby can detect a person who really loves it; ran after him when he rode on horseback, thrust their little hands into his when he walked, and hung round the stone porch in which he had the habit of sitting on a summer afternoon, reading the newspaper in the sun, and chatting to the passers by, (for he knew every soul in the place, gentle or simple,) holding a long dialogue with one, sending a jest after another, and a kind nod to the third. Thither his clients, the children, would resort every evening, as much, I verily believe, for love of their patron as for the gingerbread, apples, and half-pence,—the tops, marbles, and balls, which used to issue from those capacious magazines, his pockets.

The house, to which this porch belonged, was well suited to the tastes and station of its owner;—stately, old-fashioned, and spacious; situate in the principal street, and commanding the market-place,—a mansion in a town. Behind was a formal garden in the Dutch style,—terraces, and beds of flowers, and tall yew hedges, and holly and box cut into various puzzling shapes, dragons, peacocks, lions, and swans. Within-doors all was equally precise and out of date, being (except the museum) under the special and exclusive dominion of the lady of the house.

Mrs. Evelyn formed just the contrast with her husband which is said to tell best in matrimony. She was nearly twenty years younger in actual age, but seemed twenty years older from the mere absence of his vivacity. In all essential points they agreed perfectly; were equally charitable, gener-

ous, hospitable, and just ; but of their minor differences there was no end. She was grave, and slow, and formal—upright, thin, and pale ; dressed with a sort of sober splendour ; wore a great quantity of old-fashioned jewellery : went airing every day ; and got up, breakfasted, dined, and supped, and went to bed at exactly the same minute, the whole year round,—clock-work was never more regular. Then she was addicted to a fussing and fidgetty neatness, such as is held proper to old maids and Dutch women, and kept the house afloat with perpetual scourings. Moreover she had a hatred of motion and idleness, and pursued as a duty some long, tiresome, useless piece of handy-work. Knitting a carpet, for instance, or netting a veil, or constructing that hideous piece of female joinery, a patch-work counterpane. The room in which I slept bore notable testimony to her industry ; the whole fringe of the bed and window curtains being composed of her knotting, and the hearth-rug of her work, as well as a chair, miscalled easy, stuffed into a hardness bumping against you in every direction, and covered with huge flowers, in small tent-stitch, flowers that would have done honour to the gardens of Brobdignag. Besides this she was a genealogist, and used to bewilder herself and her hearers in a labyrinth of pedigree, which even at this distance of time it gives me a head-ache to think of ; nay, she was so unmerciful as to expect that I should understand and recollect all the intricacies of my own descent, and how I came to be of kin to the innumerable cousins to whom she introduced me,—I could as soon have learnt that despair of my childhood, the multiplication table.

All this might seem to compose no very desirable companion for an idle girl of sixteen ; but I had not been a week in the house before I loved her very nearly as well as my dear godfather, although in a different way. Her thorough goodness made itself felt ; and she was so perfectly a gentlewoman, so constantly considerate and kind, so liberal and charitable, in deed and word, that nobody could help loving Mrs. Evelyn. Be-

sides, we had one taste in common, a fondness for her peculiar territory, the orchard, a large grassy spot covered with fine old fruit trees, divided from the flower garden on the north by a magnificent yew hedge, bounded on one side by a filbert walk, on the other by the high ivied stone wall of the potagerie, and sloping down on the south to a broad sparkling rivulet, which went dancing along like a thing of life, (as your northern rivulet is apt to do,) forming a thousand tiny bays and promontories, and letting in a prospect of matchless beauty. Fancy a winding woodland valley, a rural bridge, a village, with its Gothic church, and a steep acclivity crowned with the ruins of a venerable castle, thrown together with a felicity of form and colouring which might beseeem a landscape-painter's dream, and you will have a faint idea of the view from that orchard. Under the yew hedge, on a sunny bank thickly set with roses and honeysuckles, and flowers, and sweet herbs, were Mrs. Evelyn's pets, her only pets, the bees. She was so fond of them, and visited them so often, that I used to wonder that she allowed them to be taken; but her love of bees was balanced by her extraordinary predilection for honey: honey, especially when eaten in the comb, was, in her mind, a specific for all diseases, an universal panacæa, the true elixir vitæ. She imputed her own good health entirely to this salutary regimen; and was sure to trace every illness she heard of to some neglect of honey-eating. That she never could prevail on her husband to taste this natural balsam (as she was wont to call it) must have been the great evil of her matrimonial life. Every morning did she predict death or disease to the sturdy recusant; and every morning was she answered by the same keen glance of the laughing hazel eye, and the same arch nod of defiance. There he sat, a living witness that man might thrive without honey. It was really too provoking.

Another point in dispute between them arose out of Mr. Evelyn's extraordinary addiction to match-making. He always insisted on calling marriage a happy ceremony, al-

though one should think he had attended **weddings** enough to know that a funeral is generally lively in the comparison ; and I am persuaded that dear as he held his genuine asbestos, a piece of bride-cake, drawn nine times through the ring, would for the time being have been held the greater treasure. Accordingly he was the general confidant of all courtships of gentility within ten miles, and even, with all deference be it spoken, of some wooings which had no gentility to boast ; for his taste being known, and his abilities in that line duly appreciated, half the youths in the town came bowing to his honour to beg his good word. To his honour's good word and his own goodly person did John Bell, head waiter of the Greyhound, owe the felicity of calling the buxom widow Wilson, the rich landlady of that well-accustomed inn, Mrs. Bell. To his honour's good word, and a threatened loss of custom, was Robert Heron, the smart young linen-draper, indebted for the fair hand of Margaret Car, sole heiress of Archy Car, Scotchman and barber, between whom and old Robert Heron a Capulet and Montague feud, originating in a quarrel about their respective countries, had subsisted for a dozen years. Nothing short of my godfather's threatening to learn to shave could have brought that Romeo and Juliet together. His honour related these exploits with great complacency, whilst his wife did not fail to remind him of the less fortunate exertions of his talent. How his influence gained poor Will the blacksmith his shrew, or Jem the gardener his dawdle. But such accidents will befall the ablest diplomatists. The grand object of his schemes at present was an union between two individuals of his own household. Mrs. Evelyn's personal attendant was a stiff perpendicular old maid, bony and meagre in her person, with red hair, and something of a vinegar aspect,—for the rest a well-intentioned woman, and a valuable servant. Mr. Evelyn had been looking out for a sweetheart for this amiable damsel (Mrs. Embleton by name) for the last ten years, and had begun to despair of success, when all at

once it occurred to him to strike up a match between her and his fat coachman, Samuel—a round jolly old bachelor, blunt and bluff, with a broad red face, a knowing grin, and a most magnificent coachmanlike wig. He began in due form by rallying Mrs. Embleton on her conquest. Mrs. Embleton minced and simpered—no objection in that quarter ! Then he consulted Mrs. Evelyn,—Mrs. Evelyn remonstrated ; that however he knew by experience might be overcome. Then he laughed at Samuel,—Samuel whistled ;—that was rather dismaying. The next day he returned to the charge—and again Samuel whistled,—worse and worse !—A third time his master attacked him, and a third time did Samuel whistle :—and any body but my godfather would have despaired. He however did not. At this point stood the game, when I left the north ; and the very first letter I received from Mrs. Evelyn told me that the marriage was settled, the wedding-day fixed, and the bride-cake purchased. And the next brought tidings (for I still had my doubts of Samuel) that the ceremony was actually performed, and the happy knot tied ; and Mrs. Evelyn seemed pacified, and the bridegroom resigned. No withstanding my dear godfather !

MY GODFATHER'S MANŒUVRING.

I HAVE said that my dear godfather was a great match-maker. One of his exploits in this way, which occurred during my second visit to him and Mrs. Evelyn, I am now about to relate.

Amongst the many distant cousins to whom I was introduced in that northern region, was a young kinswoman of the name of Hervey—Lucy Hervey—an orphan heiress of considerable fortune, who lived in the same town and the same street with my godfather, under the protection of a lady who had been the governess of her childhood, and continued with

her as the friend of her youth. Sooth to say, their friendship was of that tender and sentimental sort at which the world, the wicked world, is so naughty as to laugh. Miss Reid and Miss Hervey were names quite as inseparable as goose and apple-sauce, or tongue and chicken. They regularly made their appearance together, and there would have appeared I know not what of impropriety in speaking of either singly ; it would have looked like a tearing asunder of the "double cherry," respecting which, in their case, even the "seeming parted" would have been held too disjunctive a phrase, so tender and inseparable was their union ; although, as far as resemblance went, no simile could be more inapplicable. Never were two people more unlike in mind and person.

Lucy Hervey was a pretty little woman of six and twenty ; but from a delicate figure, delicate features, and a most delicate complexion, looking much younger. Perhaps the total absence of strong expression, the mildness and simplicity of her countenance, and the artlessness and docility of her manner, might conduce to the mistake. She was a sweet gentle creature, generous and affectionate ; and not wanting in sense, although her entire reliance on her friend's judgment, and constant habit of obedience to her wishes, rendered the use of it somewhat rare.

Miss Reid was a tall awkward woman, raw-boned, lank, and huge, just what one fancies a man would be in petticoats ; with a face that, except the beard, (certainly she had no beard,) might have favoured the supposition ; so brown and bony and stern and ill-favoured was her unfortunate visage. In one point she was lucky. There was no guessing at her age, certainly not within ten years ; nor within twenty. She looked old : but with that figure, those features, and that complexion, she must have looked old at eighteen. To guess her age was impossible. Her voice was deep and dictatorial ; her manner rough and assuming ; and her conversation unmercifully sensible and oracular—"full of wise saws and mo-

dern instances." For the rest, in spite of her inauspicious exterior, she was a good sort of disagreeable woman: charitable and kind in her way; genuinely fond of Lucy Hervey, whom she petted and scolded and coaxed and managed just as a nurse manages a child; and tolerably well liked of all her acquaintance—except Mr. Evelyn, who had been at war with her for the last nine years, on the subject of my fair cousin's marriage; and had at last come to regard her pretty much as a prime minister may look on an opposition leader,—as a regular opponent, an obstacle to be put down, or swept away. I verily believe that he hated her as much as his kindly nature could hate any body.

To be sure, it was no slight grievance to have so fair a subject for his matrimonial speculations, a kinswoman too, just under his very eye, and to find all his plans thwarted by that inexorable *gouvernante*—more especially, as without her aid it was morally certain that the pretty Lucy would never have had the heart to say *no* to any body. Ever since Miss Hervey was seventeen, my dear godpapa had been scheming for her advantage. It was quite melancholy to hear him count up the husbands she might have had,—beginning with the Duke's son, her partner at her first race ball,—and ending with the young newly-arrived physician, his last protégé: "now," he said, "she might die an old maid; he had done with her." And there did actually appear to be a cessation of all his matrimonial plans in that quarter. Miss Reid herself laid aside her mistrust of him; and a truce, if not a peace, was tacitly concluded between these sturdy antagonists. Mr. Evelyn seemed to have given up the game—a strange thing for him to do whilst he had a pawn left! But so it was. His adversary had the board all to herself; and was in as good humour as a winning player generally is. Miss Reid was never remembered so amiable. We saw them almost every day, as the fashion is amongst neighbours in small towns, and used to ride and walk together continually—although Lucy,

whose health was delicate, frequently declined accompanying us on our distant excursions.

Our usual bean, besides the dear godpapa, was a Mr. Morris, the curate of the parish—an uncouth, gawky, lengthy man, with an astounding Westmoreland dialect, and a most portentous laugh. Really his ha! ha! was quite a shock to the nerves—a sort of oral shower-bath; so sudden and so startling was the explosion. In loudness, it resembled half a dozen ordinary laughs “rolled into one;” and as the gentleman was of a facetious disposition and chorused his own good things, as well as those of other people, with this awful cachinnation, it was no joking matter. But he was so excellent a person, so cordial, so jovial, so simple-hearted, and so contented with a lot none of the most prosperous, that one could not help liking him, laugh and all. He was a widower, with one only son, a Cambridge scholar, of whom he was deservedly proud. Edward Morris, beside his academical honours, (I think he had been senior wrangler of his year,) was a very fine young man, with an intelligent countenance, but exceedingly shy, silent, and abstracted. I could not help thinking the poor youth was in love; but his father and Mr. Evelyn laid the whole blame on the mathematics. He would sit sometimes for an hour together, immersed, as they said, in his calculations, with his eyes fixed on Lucy Hervey, as if her sweet face had been the problem he was solving. But your mathematicians are privileged people; and so apparently my fair cousin thought, for she took no notice, unless by blushing a shade the deeper. It was worth while to look at Lucy Hervey, when Edward Morris was gazing on her in his absent fits; her cheeks were as red as a rose.

How these blushes came to escape the notice of Miss Reid, I cannot tell,—unless she might happen to have her own attention engrossed by Edward's father. For certain, that original paid her, in his odd way, great attention; was her constant beau in our walking parties; sat by her side at

dinner; and manœuvred to get her for his partner at whist. She had the benefit of his best bon-mots, and his loudest laughs; and she seemed to me not to dislike that portentous sound so much as might have been expected from a lady of her particularity. I ventured to hint my observations to Mr. Evelyn; who chuckled, laid his forefinger against his nose, rubbed his hands, and called me a simpleton.

Affairs were in this position, when one night just at going to bed, my good godfather, with a little air of mystery, (no uncommon preparation to his most trifling plans,) made an appointment to walk with me before breakfast, as far as a pet farm about a mile out of the town, the superintendence of which was one of his greatest amusements. Early the next morning, the house-maid, who usually attended me, made her appearance, and told me that her master was waiting for me, that I must make haste, and that he desired I would be smart, as he expected a party to breakfast at the farm. This sort of injunction is seldom thrown away on a damsel of eighteen; accordingly, I adjusted, with all despatch, a new blue silk pelisse, and sallied forth into the corridor, which I heard him pacing as impatiently as might be. There, to my no small consternation, instead of the usual gallant compliments of the most gallant of godfathers, I was received with very disapproving glances; told that I looked like an old woman in that dowdy-coloured pelisse, and conjured to exchange it for a white gown. Half affronted, I nevertheless obeyed; doffed the pelisse, and donned the white gown, as ordered; and being greeted this time with a bright smile, and a chuck under the chin, we set out in high good-humour on our expedition.

Instead, however, of proceeding straight to the farm, Mr. Evelyn made a slight deviation from our course, turning down the market-place, and into the warehouse of a certain Mrs. Bennet, milliner and mantua-maker, a dashing over-dressed dame, who presided over the fashions for ten miles round, and marshalled a compter full of caps and bonnets at one side of

the shop, whilst her husband, an obsequious civil bowing tradesman, dealt out gloves and stockings on the other. A little dark parlour behind was common to both. Into this den was I ushered, and Mrs. Bennet, with many apologies, began, at a signal from my godfather, to divest me of all my superfluous blueness, silk handkerchief, sash and wrist-ribands, (for with the constancy which is born of opposition, I had, in relinquishing my obnoxious pelisse, clung firmly to the obnoxious colour,) replacing them by white satin ribands and a beautiful white shawl; and, finally, exchanging my straw bonnet for one of white silk, with a deep lace veil—that piece of delicate finery which all women delight in. Whilst I was now admiring the richness of the genuine Brussels point, and now looking at myself in a little glass which Mrs. Bennet was holding to my face, for the better display of her millinery—the bonnet, to do her justice, was pretty and becoming—during this engrossing contemplation, her smooth silky husband crept behind me with the stealthy pace of a cat, and relying, as it seems, on my pre-occupation, actually drew my York-tan gloves from my astonished hands, and substituted a pair of his own best white kid. This operation being completed, my godpapa, putting his forefinger to his lip in token of secrecy, hurried me with a look of great triumph from the shop.

He walked at a rapid pace; and, between quick motion and amazement, I was too much out of breath to utter a word, till we had passed the old Gothic castle at the end of the town, and crossed the long bridge that spans its wide and winding river. I then rained questions on my dear old friend, who chuckled and nodded, and vented two or three half-laughs, but vouchsafed nothing tending to a reply. At length we came to a spot where the road turned suddenly to the left, (the way to the farm,) whilst, right before us, rose a knoll, on which stood the church, a large, heavy, massive building, almost a cathedral, finely relieved by the range of woody hills, which shut in the landscape. A turning gate, with a tall

straight cypress on either side, led into the church-yard ; and through this gate Mr. Evelyn passed. The church-door was a little a-jar, and through the crevice was seen peeping the long red nose of the old clerk, a Bardolphian personage, to whom my godfather, who loved to oblige people in their own way, sometimes did the questionable service of clearing off his score at the Greyhound ; his red nose and a skirt of his shabby black coat peeped through the porch ; whilst, behind one of the buttresses, glimmered, for an instant, the white drapery of a female figure. I did not need these indications to convince me that a wedding was the object in view ; that had been certain from the first cashiering of my blue ribands ; but I was still at a loss as to the parties ; and felt quite relieved by Mr. Evelyn's question, " Pray, my dear, were you ever a bride's-maid ?"—since, in the extremity of my perplexity, I had had something like an apprehension that an unknown beau might appear at the call of this mighty manager, and I be destined to play the part of bride myself. Comforted to find that I was only to enact the confidante, I had now leisure to be exceedingly curious as to my prima donna. My curiosity was speedily gratified.

On entering the church we had found only a neighbouring clergyman, not Mr. Morris, at the altar ; and looking round at the opening of another door, I perceived the worthy curate in a jetty clerical suit, bristling with newness, leading Miss Reid be-flounced and be-scarfed and be-veiled and be-plumed, and all in a flutter of bridal finery, in great state, up the aisle. Mr. Evelyn advanced to meet them, took the lady's fair hand from Mr. Morris, and led her along with all the grace of an old courtier ; I fell into the procession at the proper place ; the amiable pair were duly married, and I thought my office over. I was never more mistaken in my life.

In the midst of the customary confusion of kissing and wishing joy, and writing and signing registers and certificates, which forms so important and disagreeable a part of that dis-

agreeable and important ceremony, Mr. Evelyn had vanished ; and just as the bride was inquiring for him, with the intention of leaving the church, he reappeared, through the very same side-door which had admitted the first happy couple, leading Lucy Hervey, and followed by Edward Morris. The father evidently expected them ; the new step-mother as evidently did not. Never did a thief, taken in the manner, seem more astonished than that sage gouvernante ! Lucy on her part blushed and hung back, and looked shyer and prettier than ever ; the old clerk grinned ; the clergyman, who had shown some symptoms of astonishment at the first wedding, now smiled to Mr. Evelyn, as if this accounted and made amends for it ; whilst the dear godpapa himself chuckled and nodded and rubbed his hands, and chucked both bride and bride's-maid under the chin, and seemed ready to cut capers for joy. Again the book was opened at the page of destiny ; again I held the milk-white glove ; and after nine years of unsuccessful manœuvring, my cousin Lucy was married. It was, undoubtedly, the most triumphant event of the good old man's life ; and I don't believe that either couple ever saw cause to regret the dexterity in the art of match-making which produced their double union. They have been as happy as people usually are in this work-a-day world, especially the young mathematician and his pretty wife : and their wedding-day is still remembered in W. ; for besides his munificence to singer, ringer, sexton, and clerk, Mr. Evelyn roasted two sheep on the occasion, gave away ten bride cakes, and made the whole town tipsy.

THE COBBLER OVER THE WAY.

ONE of the noisiest inhabitants of the small irregular town * of Cranley, in which I had the honour to be born, was a cer-

* Townlet, old Leland would have called it, and truly the word is worth borrowing.

tain cobbler, by name Jacob Giles. He lived exactly over-right our house, in a little appendage to the baker's shop—an excrescence from that goodly tenement, which, when the door was closed (for the tiny square window at its side was all but invisible) might, from its shape and its dimensions, be mistaken for an oven or a pigstye, *ad libitum*. By day, when the half-hatch was open, and the cobbler discovered at work within, his dwelling seemed constructed purposely to hold his figure; as nicely adapted to its size and motions, as the little toy called a weather-house is to the height and functions of the puppets who inhabit it;—only that Jacob Giles's stall was less accommodating than the weather-house, inasmuch as by no chance could his apartment have been made to contain two inmates in any position whatsoever.

At that half-hatch might Jacob Giles be seen stitching and stitching, with the peculiar regular two-handed jerk proper to the art of cobbling, from six in the morning to six at night,—deducting always certain mornings and afternoons and whole days given, whenever his purse or his credit would permit, to the insnaring seductions of the tap-room at the King's Head. At all other seasons at the half-hatch he might be seen, looking so exactly like a Dutch picture, that I, simple child that I was, took a fine Teniers in my father's possession for a likeness of him. There he sat—with a dirty red night-cap over his grizzled hair, a dingy waistcoat, and old blue coat, darned, patched, and ragged, a greasy leather apron, a pair of crimson plush inexpressibles, worsted stockings of all the colours known in hosiery, and shoes that illustrated the old saying of the shoemaker's wife, by wanting mending more than any shoes in the parish.

The face belonging to this costume was rough and weather-beaten, deeply lined and deeply tinted, of a right copper-colour, with a nose that would have done honour to Bardolph, and a certain indescribable half-tipsy look, even when sober. Nevertheless, the face, ugly and tipsy as it was, had its merits.

There was humour in the wink and in the nod, and in the knowing roll with which he transferred the quid of tobacco, his constant recreation and solace, from one cheek to the other; there was good-humour in the half-shut eye, the pursed-up mouth, and the whole jolly visage; and in the countless variety of strange songs and ballads which, from morning to night, he poured forth from that half-hatch, there was a happy mixture of both. There he sat, in that small den, looking something like a thrush in a gold-finch's cage, and singing with as much power, and far wider range,—albeit his notes were hardly so melodious:—Jobson's songs in the "Devil to Pay," and

"A cobbler there was, and he lived in a stall,
Which served him for parlour, for kitchen, and hall,"

being his favourites.

The half-hatch was, however, incomparably the best place in which to see him, for his face, with all its grotesqueness, was infinitely pleasanter to look at than his figure, one of his legs being shorter than the other, which obliged him to use a crutch, and the use of the crutch having occasioned a protuberance of the shoulder, which very nearly invested him with the dignity of a hump. Little cared he for his lameness! He swung along merrily and rapidly, especially when his steps tended to the ale-house, where he was a man of prime importance, not merely in right of his good songs and his good-fellowship, but in graver moments, as a scholar and a politician, being the best reader of a newspaper, and the most sagacious commentator on a debate, of any man who frequented the tap, the parish clerk himself not excepted.

Jacob Giles had, as he said, some right to talk about the welfare of old England, having, at one time of his life, been a householder, shopkeeper, and elector (N. B. his visits to the ale-house may account for his descent from the shop to the stall) in the neighbouring borough of D., a place noted for the frequency and virulence of its contested elections. There was no

event of his life on which our cobbler piqued himself so much as on having, as he affirmed, assisted in "saving his country," by forming one of the glorious majority of seven, by which a Mr. Brown, of those days, a silent, stupid, and respectable country gentleman, a dead vote on one side of the House, ousted a certain Mr. Smith, also a country gentleman, equally silent, stupid, and respectable, and a dead vote on the other side. Which parties in the state these two worthy senators espoused, it was somewhat difficult to gather from the zealous champion of the victorious hero. Local politics have commonly very little to do with any general question: the blues or the yellows, the greens or the reds,—colours, not principles, predominate at an election,—which, in this respect, as well as in the ardour of the contest, and the quantity of money risked on the event, bears no small resemblance to a horse-race.

Whatever might have been the party of his favourite candidate, Jacob himself was a Tory of the very first water. His residence at Cranley was during the later days of the French Revolution, when Loyalty and Republicanism, Pittite and Foxite, divided the land. Jacob Giles was a Tory, a Pittite, a Church-and-King, and Life-and-Fortune man—the loudest of the loyal; held Buonaparte for an incarnation of the evil spirit, and established an Anti-Gallican club at the King's Head, where he got tipsy every Saturday night for the good of the nation. Nothing could exceed the warmth of Jacob's loyalty. He even wanted to join the Cranley volunteers, quoting to the drill-serjeant, who quietly pointed to the crutch and the shoulder, the notable examples of Captain Green, who halted, and Lieutenant Jones, who was awry, as precedents for his own eligibility. The hump and the limp united were, however, too much to be endured. The man of scarlet declared there was no such piece of deformity in the whole awkward squad, and Jacob was declared inadmissible;—a personal slight, (to say nothing of his being debarred the privi-

lege of shedding his blood in defence of the king and constitution,) which our cobbler found so hard to bear, that with the least encouragement in the world from the opposition of Cranley, he would have ratted. One word of sympathy would have carried Mr. Giles, and his songs and his tipsy-ness, to the 'Russel-and-Sidney Club,' (Jacobins Jacob used to call them,) at the Greyhound; but the Jacobins laughed, and lost their proselyte; the Anti-Gallicans retained Jacob, —and Jacob retained his consistency.

How my friend the cobbler came to be theoretically so violent an Anti-jacobin is best known to himself. For certain he was in practice far more of what would in these days be called a radical; was constantly infringing the laws which he esteemed so perfect, and bringing into contempt the authorities for which he professed such enthusiastic veneration. Drunk or sober, in his own quarrels, or in the quarrels of others, he waged a perpetual war with justice; hath been seen to snap his fingers at an order of sessions, the said order having for object the removal of a certain barrel-organ man, "his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;" and got into a *demelé* with the church in the person of the old sexton, whom he nearly • knocked down with the wind of his crutch (N. B. Jacob took care not to touch the old man) for driving away his clients, the boys who were playing at marbles on the tomb-stones. Besides these skirmishes, he was in a state of constant hostility with the officials called constables; and had not his reputation, good or bad, stood him in stead, his Saturday-nights' exploits would have brought him acquainted with half the round-houses, bridewells, stocks, and whipping-posts in the county. His demerits brought him off. "It's only that merry rogue, Jacob!" said the lenient: "only that sad dog, the cobbler!" cried the severe: and between these contrary epithets, which in Master Giles's case bore so exactly the same meaning, the poor cobbler escaped.

In good truth, it would have been a pity if Jacob's hebdo-

madal deviations from the straight path had brought him into any serious scrape, for, tipsy or sober, a better-natured creature never lived. Poor as he was, he had always something for those poorer than himself; would share his scanty dinner with a starving beggar, and his last quid of tobacco with a crippled sailor. The children came to him for nuts and apples, for comical stories and droll songs; the very curs of the street knew that they had a friend in the poor cobbler. He even gave away his labour and his time. Many a shoe hath he heeled with a certainty that the wretched pauper could not pay him; and many a job, extra-official, hath he turned his hand to, with no expectation of fee or reward. The 'cobbler over the way' was the constant resource of every body in want of a help, and whatever the station or circumstances of the person needing him, his services might be depended on to the best of his power.

For my own part, I can recollect Jacob Giles as long as I can recollect any thing. He made the shoes for my first doll—(pink I remember they were)—a doll called Sophy, who had the misfortune to break her neck by a fall from the nursery window; Jacob Giles made her pink slippers, and mended all the shoes of the family, with whom he was a universal favourite. My father delighted in his statesmanship, which must have been very entertaining; my mother in his benevolence; and I in his fun. He used to mimic Punch for my amusement; and I once greatly affronted the real Punch, by preferring the cobbler's performance of the closing scenes. Jacob was a general favourite in our family; and one member of it was no small favourite of Jacob's: that person was neither more nor less than my nursery-maid, Nancy Dawson.

Nancy Dawson was the daughter of a farmer in the neighbourhood, a lively, clever girl, more like a French *soubrette* than an English maid-servant, *gentille* and *espiègle*; not a regular beauty—hardly, perhaps, pretty; but with bright laughing eyes, a ready smile, a pleasant speech, and altogether as dan-

gerous a person for an opposite neighbour as an old bachelor could desire. Jacob became seriously enamoured; wasted half his mornings in watching our windows, for my nursery looked out upon the street; and limped after us every afternoon when she took me (a small damsel of three years old, or thereabout) out walking. He even left off his tobacco, his worsted night-cap, his tipsyness, and his Saturday-night's club; got a whole coat to his back, set a patch on his shoe, and talked of taking a shop and settling in life. This, however, was nothing wonderful. Nancy's charms might have fired a colder heart than beat in the bosom of Jacob Giles. But that Nancy should 'abase her eyes' on him: there was the marvel. Nancy! who had refused Peter Green the grocer, and John Keep the butcher, and Sir Henry's smart gamekeeper, and our own tall footman! Nancy to think of a tippling cripple like the cobbler over the way,—that was something to wonder at!

Nancy, when challenged on the subject, neither denied nor assented to the accusation. She answered very demurely that her young lady liked Mr. Giles, that he made the child laugh, and was handy with her, and was a careful person to leave her with if she had to go on an errand for her mistress or the housekeeper. So Jacob continued our walking footman.

Our walks were all in one direction. About a mile south of Cranley was a large and beautiful coppice, at one corner of which stood the cottage of the woodman, a fine young man, William Cotton by name, whose sister Mary was employed by my mother as sempstress. The wood, the cottage, and the cottage garden, were separated by a thick hedge and wide ditch from a wild broken common covered with sheep—a common full of turfy knolls and thymy banks, where the heath-flower and the hair-bell blew profusely, and where the sun poured forth a flood of glory on the golden-blossomed broom. To one corner of this common,—a sunny nook covered with little turfy hillocks, originally, I suppose, formed

by the moles, but which I used to call Cock-Robins' graves,—Nancy generally led; and there she would frequently, almost constantly, leave me under Jacob's protection whilst she jumped over a stile inaccessible to my little feet, sometimes to take a message to Mary Cotton, sometimes to get me flowers from the wood, sometimes for blackberries, sometimes for nuts, —but always on some ostensible and well-sounding errand.

Nancy's absences, however, became longer and longer; and one evening Jacob and I grew mutually fidgetty. He had told his drollest stories, made his most comical faces, and played Punch twice over to divert me; but I was tired and cross; it was getting late in the autumn; the weather was cold; the sun had gone down; and I began to cry amain for home and for papa. Jacob, much distressed by my plight, partly to satisfy me, and partly to allay his own irritability, deposited me in the warmest nook he could find, and scrambled over the stile in search of Nancy. Voices in the wood—her voice and William's—guided him to the spot where she and the young forester sat side by side at the foot of an oak tree; and unseen by the happy couple, the poor cobbler heard the following dialogue.

“On Saturday then, Nancy, I may give in the banns. You are sure that your mistress will let your sister take your place till she is suited?”

“Quite sure,” rejoined Nancy; “she is so kind.”

“And on Monday fortnight the wedding is to be. Remember, not an hour later than eight o'clock on Monday fortnight. Consider how long I have waited—almost half a year.”

“Well!” said Nancy, “at eight o'clock on Monday fortnight.”

“And the cobbler!” cried William; “that excellent under-nurse, who is waiting so contentedly on our little lady at the other side of the hedge”—

“Ah, the poor cobbler!” interrupted Nancy.

"We'll ask him to the wedding-dinner," added William.

"Yes; the poor cobbler!" continued the saucy maiden; "my old lover, the 'cobbler over the way,' we'll certainly ask him to the wedding-dinner. It will comfort him."

And to the wedding-dinner the cobbler went; and he was comforted:—he kissed the pretty bride; he shook hands with the handsome bridegroom, resumed his red cap and his tobacco, got tipsy to his heart's content, and reeled home, singing 'God save the king,' right happy to find himself still a bachelor.

THE GENERAL AND HIS LADY.

ALL persons of a certain standing in life remember—for certainly nothing was ever more unforgettable—the great scarlet fever of England, when volunteering was the order of the day; when you could scarcely meet with a man who was not, under some denomination or other, a soldier; when a civil topic could hardly find a listener; when little boys played at reviewing, and young ladies learned the sword exercise. It was a fine ebullition of national feeling—of loyalty and of public spirit, and cannot be looked back to without respect; but, at the moment, the strange contrasts—the perpetual discrepancies—and the comical self-importance which it produced and exhibited, were infinitely diverting. I was a very little girl at the time; but even now I cannot recollect without laughing the appearance of a cornet of yeomanry cavalry, who might have played Falstaff without stuffing, and was obliged to complete his military decorations by wearing (and how he contrived to keep up the slippery girdle one can hardly imagine) three silken sashes sewed into one! To this day, too, I remember the chuckling delight with which a worthy linen-draper of my acquaintance heard himself addressed as Captain, whilst measuring a yard of riband; pretending to make light of the appellation, but evidently as proud of his title as

a newly-dubbed knight, or a peer of the last edition ; and I never shall forget the astonishment with which I beheld a field-officer, in his double epaulettes, advance obsequiously to the carriage-door, to receive an order for five shillings worth of stationery ! The prevailing spirit fell in exactly with the national character,—loyal, patriotic, sturdy, and independent ; very proud, and a little vain ; fond of excitement, and not indifferent to personal distinction ; the whole population borne along by one laudable and powerful impulse, and yet each man preserving, in the midst of that great leveller, military discipline, his individual peculiarities and blameless self-importance. It was a most amusing era !

In large country towns, especially where they mustered two or three different corps, and the powerful stimulant of emulation was super-added to the original martial fury, the goings on of these Captain Pattypans furnished a standing comedy, particularly when aided by the solemn etiquette and strong military spirit of their wives, who took precedence according to the rank of their husbands, from the colonel's lady down to the corporal's, and were as complete martialists, as proud of the services of their respective regiments, and as much impressed with the importance of field-days and reviews, as if they had actually mounted the cockade and handled the fire-lock in their own proper persons. Foote's inimitable farce was more than realized ; and the ridicules of that period have only escaped being perpetuated in a new 'Mayor of Garrat,' by the circumstance of the whole world, dramatists and all, being involved in them. "The lunacy was so ordinary, that the whippers were in *arms* too."

That day is past. Even the yeomanry cavalry, the last lingering remnant of the volunteer system, whom I have been accustomed to see annually parade through the town of B., with my pleasant friend Captain M. at their head,—that respectable body, of which the band always appeared to me so much more numerous than the corps,—even that respectable

body is dissolved ; whilst the latest rag of the infantry service—the long preserved uniform and cocked hat of my old acquaintance, Dr. R., whilom physician to the B. Association, figured last summer as a scarecrow, stuffed with straw, and perched on a gate, an old gun tucked under its arm, to frighten the sparrows from his cherry-orchard ! Except the real soldiers, and every now and then some dozen of fox-hunters at a hunt-ball, (whose usual dress-uniform, by the way, scarlet over black, makes them look just like a flight of lady-birds,) excepting these gallant sportsmen, and the real *bona fide* officers, one cannot now see a red coat for love or money. The glory of the volunteers is departed !

In the mean time I owe to them one of the pleasantest recollections of my early life.

It was towards the beginning of the last war, when the novelty and freshness of the volunteering spirit had somewhat subsided, and the government was beginning to organize a more regular defensive force, under the name of local militia, that our old friend Colonel Sanford was appointed, with the rank of brigadier-general, to the command of the district in which we resided. Ever since I could recollect, I had known Colonel Sanford—indeed a little brother of mine, who died at the age of six months, had had the honour to be his godson ; and from my earliest remembrance, the good Colonel—fie upon me to forget his brigadiership !—the good General had been set down by myself, as well as by the rest of the world, for a confirmed old bachelor. His visits to our house had, indeed, been only occasional, since he had been almost constantly on active service, in different quarters of the globe ; so that we had merely caught a sight of him as he passed from the East Indies to the West, or in his still more rapid transit from Gibraltar to Canada. For full a dozen years however (and further the recollection of a young lady of sixteen could hardly be expected to extend) he had seemed to be a gentleman very considerably on the wrong side of fifty,—

"or by'r Lady inclining to threescore,"—and that will constitute an old bachelor, in the eyes of any young lady in Christendom.

His appearance was not calculated to diminish that impression. In his person, General Sanford was tall, thin, and erect; as stiff and perpendicular as a ramrod! with a bald head, most exactly powdered; a military queue; a grave formal countenance; and a complexion, partly tanned and partly frozen, by frequent exposure to the vicissitudes of different climates, into one universal and uniform tint of reddish brown or brownish red.

His disposition was in good keeping with this solemn exterior,—grave and saturnine. He entered little into ladies' conversation, with whom, indeed, he seldom came much in contact; and for whose intellect he was apt to profess a slight shade of contempt,—an unhappy trick, to which your solemn wiseacre is sometimes addicted. All men, I fear, entertain the opinion; but the clever ones discreetly keep it to themselves. With other gentlemen he did hold grave converse, on politics, the weather, the state of the roads, the news of the day, and other gentlemanly topics; and when much at ease in his company, he would favour them with a few prosing stories, civil and military. One, in particular, was of formidable length. I have seen a friend of his wince as he began, "When I was in Antigua."—For the rest, the good General was an admirable person; a gentleman by birth, education, and character; a man of the highest honour, the firmest principles, and the purest benevolence. He was an excellent officer, also, of the old school; one who had seen much service; was a rigid disciplinarian, and somewhat of a Martinet. Just the man to bring the new levies into order, although not unlikely to look with considerable scorn on the holiday soldiers, who had never seen any thing more nearly resembling a battle than a sham fight at a review.

He paid us a visit, of course, when he came to be installed

into his new office, and to take a house at B., his destined head-quarters ; and after the first hearty congratulations on his promotion, his old friend, a joker by profession, began rallying him, as usual, on the necessity of taking a wife ; on which, instead of returning his customary grave negative, the General stammered, looked foolish, and, incredible as it may seem that a blush could be seen through such a complexion, actually blushed ; and when left alone with his host after dinner, in lieu' of the much dreaded words, " When I was in Antigua !" seriously requested his advice on the subject of matrimony : which that sage counsellor, certain that a marriage was settled, and not quite sure that it had not already taken place, immediately gave, in the most satisfactory manner ; and before the conversation was finished, was invited to attend the wedding on the succeeding Thursday.

The next time that we saw the General, he was accompanied by a lovely little girl, whom he introduced as his wife, but who might readily have passed for his granddaughter. I wanted a month of sixteen ; and I was then, and am now, perfectly convinced that Mrs. Sanford was my junior. The fair bride had been a ward of the bridegroom's—the orphan, and, I believe, destitute daughter of a brother officer. He had placed her, many years back, at a respectable country boarding-school, where she remained, until his new appointment, and, as he was pleased to say, his friends' suggestions, induced him to resolve upon matrimony, and look about for a wife, as a necessary appendage to his official situation.

It is probable that his wife's exceeding beauty might have had something to do with his resolution as well as with his choice. I have never seen a lovelier creature. Her figure was small, round, and girlish ; full of grace and symmetry. Her face had a child-like purity and brilliancy of colouring ; an alternation of blush and smile, a sweetness and innocence of expression, such as might besee a Hebe—only still more youthful than the goddess of youth. Her manners were ex-

actly those of a child come home for the holidays,—shy and bashful, and shrinking from strangers; playful and affectionate with those whom she loved, especially her husband, who doted on her, and of whom she was very fond,—and showing, in the midst of her timidity and childishness, considerable acuteness and power of observation.

At first she seemed, as well she might be, quite bewildered by the number of persons who came to visit her. For living in a large town, and holding, in right of her husband's office, a station of no small importance in the county, every person of the slightest gentility in the town and neighbourhood, the whole visiting population of these, in general, very distinct and separate societies, thought proper to wait upon Mrs. Sanford. Mrs. Sanford was the fashion of B., and of B. shire. "Not to know her, argued yourself unknown." All the town and all the county called, and all the town invited her to tea, and all the county requested her company to dinner: and she, puzzled, perplexed, and amazed, hardly knowing by sight one individual of her innumerable acquaintance; unable to distinguish between one person and another; often forgetting titles; never remembering names; and ignorant as an infant of artificial distinctions, made twenty blunders in an hour; and kept the poor General, as punctilious an observer of the duties of society as of the duties of the service, in a perpetual state of fidget and alarm. Her mistakes were past all count,—she mislaid invitations; forgot engagements; mismatched her company; gave the mayor of B. the precedence of the county member; and hath been heard to ask an old bachelor after his wife, and an old maid after her children. There was no end to Mrs. Sanford's blunders. The old Brigade-Major, a veteran of the General's own standing, lame of a leg, and with a prodigious scar across his forehead, was kept on the constant stump with explanatory messages and conciliatory embassies,—and declared that he underwent much harder duty in that service, than ever he had performed in his official

capacity of drilling the awkward squad. The General, not content with despatching his *aide-de-camp*, exhausted himself in elaborate apologies, but embassies, apologies, and explanations were all unnecessary. Nobody could be angry with Mrs. Sanford. There was no resisting the charm of her blushing youthfulness ; her pleading voice ; her ready confession of error ; and her evident sorrow for all her little sins, whether of ignorance or heedlessness ; no withstanding her sweetness and simplicity. Even offended self-love, the hardest to appease of all the passions, yielded to the artlessness of Mrs. Sanford.

She, on her part, liked nothing so well as to steal away from her troublesome popularity, her visitors, and her fine clothes, to the ease and freedom of the country ; to put on a white frock and a straw bonnet, and run about the woods and fields with some young female friend, primrosing or birds'-nesting, according to the season. I was her usual companion in these rambles, and enjoyed them, perhaps, as much as she did ; but in a far quieter way. Her animal spirits seemed inexhaustible ; I never knew her weary ; and strong, agile, and entirely devoid of bodily fear, the thought of danger never seemed to come across her. How she enjoyed spending a long day at our house ! now bounding over a ditch, to gather a tuft of wild flowers ; now climbing a pollard, to look for a bird's nest ; now driving through the lanes in a donkey-chaise ; now galloping across the common on a pony ; now feeding the chickens ; now milking the cows ; now weeding the gravel walks ; now making hay ; and now reaping. These were her delights ! All her pleasures were equally childish : she cherished abundance of pets, such as school-girls love ; kept silk-worms, dor-mice, and canary birds ; a parrot, a squirrel, and a monkey ; three lap-dogs, and a Persian cat ; enjoyed a fair, and was enchanted with a pantomime ; always supposing that her party did not consist of fine people or strangers, but was composed of those to whom she was accus-

tomed, and who were as well disposed to merriment and good-humour as herself.

With regard to accomplishments, she knew what was commonly taught in a country school above twenty years ago, and nothing more ; played a little, sang a little, talked a little in-different French ; painted shells and roses, not particularly like nature, on card-racks and hand-screens ; danced admirably ; and was the best player at battledore and shuttlecock, hunt-the-slipper, and blind-man's-buff, in the county. Nothing could exceed the glee with which, in any family where she was intimate, she would join the children in a game of romps, herself the gayest and happiest child of the party.

For cards she had no genius. Even the noise and nonsense of a round-table could not reconcile her to those bits of painted pasteboard ; this was unlucky : it is true that the General, who played a good rubber, and looked upon it, next to a review or a battle, as the most serious business of life, and who had, moreover, a settled opinion that no woman had intellect enough to master the game, would hardly have wished to have been her partner at the whist-table ; but he also loved a snug party at piquet, just to keep him awake after dinner, and would have liked exceedingly that Mrs. Sanford should have known enough of the rules to become a decent antagonist. He was not unreasonable in his expectations, he did not desire that she should play well enough to win. He only wanted her to understand sufficient of the game to lose in a creditable manner. But it would not do : she was unconquerably stupid ; never dealt the right number of cards ; never showed her point ; was ignorant even of the common terms of the art ; did not know a quart from a quint, or a pique from a repique ; could not tell when she was capotted. There was no comfort in beating her ; so the poor General was fain to accept his old Brigade-Major as a substitute, who gave him three points and beat him.

In other respects she was an excellent wife ; gentle, affec-

tionate, and sweet tempered. She accommodated herself admirably to all the General's ways ; listened to his admonitions with deference, and to his stories with attention—the formidable one, beginning, “When I was in Antigua,” not excepted ; was kind to the old Brigade-Major ; and when he, a confirmed old bachelor, joined his patron in certain dissertations on the natural inferiority of the sex, heard them patiently, and if she smiled, took good care they should not find her out.

To be sure, her carelessness did occasionally get her husband into a scrape. Once, for instance, he, being inspecting certain corps twenty miles off, she undertook to bring his dress clothes, for the purpose of attending a ball given in his honour, and forgot his new inexpressibles, thereby putting the poor General to the trouble and expense of sending an express after the missing garment, and keeping him a close prisoner till midnight, in expectation of the return of his messenger. Another time, he being in London, and the trusty Major also absent, she was commissioned to inform him of the day fixed for a grand review ; sat down for the purpose ; wrote a long letter full of chit-chat—and he could not abide long letters ; never mentioned military affairs ; and on being reminded of her omission, crammed the important intelligence into a crossed postscript under the seal, which the General, with his best spectacles, could not have deciphered in a month ! so that the unlucky commander never made his appearance on the ground, and but for a forty years' reputation for exactness and punctuality, which made any excuse look like truth, would have fallen into sad disgrace at headquarters.

In process of time, however, even these little errors ceased. She grew tall, and her mind developed itself with her person ; still lively, ardent, and mercurial in her temperament, with an untiring spirit of life and motion, and a passionate love of novelty and gaiety, her playfulness ripened into intelligence, her

curiosity became rational, and her delight in the country deepened into an intense feeling of the beauties of nature. Thrown amidst a large and varying circle, she became, in every laudable sense of the phrase, a perfect woman of the world. Before a change in the volunteer system, and a well-merited promotion, took the General from B., she had learned to manage her town visits and her country visits, to arrange *soirées* and dinner parties, to give balls, and to plan picnics, and was the life and charm of the neighbourhood. I would not even be sure that she had not learned piquet ; for lovely as she was, and many as there were to tell her that she was lovely, her husband was always her first object ; and her whole conduct seemed guided by the spirit of that beautiful line in the most beautiful of ballads :

“ For auld Robin Gray ’s been a gude man to me.”

Since his death—for she has been long a widow—Lady Sanford—have I not said that the good General became Sir Thomas before his decease!—has lived mostly on the continent ; indulging, but always with the highest reputation, her strong taste for what is gayest in artificial life and grandest in natural scenery. I have heard of her sometimes amongst the brilliant crowds of the Roman carnival, sometimes amidst the wildest recesses of the Pyrenees ; now looking down the crater of Vesuvius ; now waltzing at a court ball at Vienna. She has made a trip to Athens, and has talked of attempting the ascent of Mont Blanc ! At present she is in England ; for a friend of mine saw her the other day at the Cowes regatta, full of life and glee, almost as pretty as ever, and quite as delightful. Of course, being also a well-dowered and childless widow, she has had lovers by the hundred, and offers by the score ; but she always says that she has made up her mind not to marry again, and I have no doubt of her keeping her resolution. She loves her liberty too dearly to part with the blessing ; and well as she got on with Sir Thomas, I think

she has had enough of matrimony. Besides, she has now reached a sedate age, and there would be a want of discretion, which hitherto she never has wanted, in venturing——

“What was that you said, ma’am? The newspaper! Have I read the newspaper?—People will always talk to me when I am writing!—Have I read to-day’s paper? No; what do you wish me to look at? This column: Police reports—new publications—births?—oh, the marriages! ‘Yesterday, at Bow Church, Mr. Smith to Miss Brown.’ Not that? Oh! the next!—‘On Friday last, at Cheltenham, by the Venerable the Archdeacon P——, Dennis O’Brien, Esq., of the —th regiment.’—But what do I care for Dennis O’Brien, Esq.? ‘What’s Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?’ I never heard of the gentleman before in my days. Oh! it’s the lady; ‘Dennis O’Brien, Esq. to Lady Sanford’—‘Angels and ministers of grace defend us!’ here is a surprise!—‘to Lady Sanford!’ Ay, my eyes did not deceive me, it’s no mistake; “relict of the late Major-General Sir Thomas Sanford, K. C. B.” And so much for a widow’s resolution! and a gay widow’s too! I would not have answered for one of the demure. A General’s widow, at the ripe age of forty, (oh, age of indiscretion!) married to an ensign in a marching regiment; young enough to be her son, I warrant me; and as poor as a church mouse! If her old husband could but know what was going forward, he would chuckle in his grave, at so notable a proof of the weakness of the sex—so irresistible a confirmation of his theory. Lady Sanford married again! Who, after this, shall put faith in woman? Lady Sandford married again!

TOM HOPKINS.

THEY who knew the little town of Cranley some thirty years ago, must needs remember Tom Hopkins, the loudest, if not the greatest man in the place, and one of the most celebrated

sportsmen in that sporting neighbourhood, which he had honoured with his residence for a longer time than he—still in the prime of life, and as tenacious of his pretensions to youth as a fading beauty—cared to hear tell of. Tom, whose family was none of the most illustrious, his ancestors having been, from time immemorial, grocers in the town, had had the good luck, before he was out of petticoats, to take the fancy of a rich relation, a grand-aunt, who, captivated, as grand-aunts are wont to be, by a happy union of prettiness and mischief, rosy cheeks and naughty tricks, the usual merits of a spoilt child, installed the chubby-faced Pickle into the post of present pet, and future heir,—sent him to school at her own expense, and declared her intention to make a gentleman of him in proper time,—a prospect which, as her hopeful grand-nephew happily conceived the immunities and privileges of gentility to consist of idleness and field-sports, proved sufficiently delightful to reconcile him to the previous formality of learning “small Latin and less Greek,” and bore him safely through the forms, with no worse reputation than that of being the greatest dunce that ever quitted the school. When that happy time arrived, however, there was some difference of opinion as to his destination, Tom having set his heart on one mode of killing, whilst his grand-aunt had decided on another. “I will be a soldier,” cried Tom, already enamoured of the art of gunnery. “You shall be an apothecary,” cried aunt Deborah, equally devoted to the draught and the pill. Physic and arms fought a pitched battle, and long and obstinate was the contest; there was even some danger that the dispute might have ended in disinheritance, to the probable benefit of the county hospital, when a discreet friend prudently suggested the possibility of uniting the two modes of putting people out of the world, and Tom consented to don the apron and sleeves and become *un garçon apothicaire*, under promise of flourishing at some future period as an army surgeon—a promise which, though not kept to the letter, was at least so far realized as to make

him a surgeon of militia, and obtain for him the enviable privilege of wearing a red coat, and meddling with fire-arms. These delights, however ecstatic, soon lost their gloss and their novelty; Tom speedily discovered that hunting and shooting were his real vocation; and aunt Deborah happening to die and to leave him a comfortable independence, he retired from the service, after one winter spent in country quarters, returned to his native town, built himself a house, set up an establishment, consisting of a couple of hunters, a brace of pointers, a servant lad, and an old woman, and began to make war on the hares, foxes, pheasants, partridges, and other *fera natura*, under the character of a sportsman, which he filled with eminent ability and success, being universally reckoned one of the boldest riders and best shots in the county.

At the time of which I speak, he was of an age somewhat equivocal; public fame called him forty, whilst he himself stuck obstinately at thirty-two; of a stout active figure, rather manly than gentlemanly, and a bold jovial visage, in excellent keeping with his person, distinguished by round bright stupid black eyes, an aquiline nose, a knowing smile, and a general comely vulgarity of aspect. His voice was hoarse and deep, his manner bluff and blunt, and his conversation loud and boisterous. With all these natural impediments to good company, the lowness of his origin recent in their memories, and the flagrant fact of his residence in a country town, staring them in the face, Mr. Tom Hopkins made his way into almost every family of consideration in the neighbourhood. Sportsmanship, sheer sportsmanship, the qualification that, more than any other, commands the respect of your great English landholder, surmounted every obstacle. There was not a man in the * * shire hunt who fenced so well, or went so fast over a country; and every table in the county was open to so eminent a personage.

With the ladies he made his way by different qualities; in the first place he was a character, an oddity, and the audacity

of his vulgarity was tolerated, where a man only half as boisterous would have been scouted; then he was gallant in his way, affected, perhaps felt, a great devotion to the sex, and they were half amused, half pleased, with the rough flattery which seemed, and probably was, so sincere. Then they liked, as all women like, his sturdiness of character, his boldness, his staunchness, and his zeal. He won Lady Frances's heart by canvassing for her husband in a contested election, during which he performed more riding, drinking, and roaring, told more lies and made more noise, than any ten of the fee'd agents; he achieved the countess's good graces by restoring her fat asthmatic lap-dog to health, appetite, and activity;—N. B. As Mr. Thomas Hopkins took Chloe home to Cranley to be nursed, it is likely that the Abernethy system may fairly claim the merit of that cure;—and he even made a favourable impression on a young marchioness, by riding to London, above seventy miles, in order to match a shade of netting silk, thereby winning a considerable wager against time of the marquis. In short, Tom Hopkins was so general a favourite with the female world, that, but for three or four flat refusals, consequent on as many very presumptuous offers, he would certainly have fallen into the mistake of thinking he might marry whom he would. As it was, he kept his own counsel, only betraying his soreness by a transient avoidance of ladies' company, and a proneness to descant at the hunt dinners on the comforts of a single state, and the manifold evils of matrimony.

His house was an ugly brick dwelling of his own erection, situate in the principal street of Cranley, and adorned with a green door and a brass knocker, giving entrance into a stone passage, which, there being no other way to the stable, served both for himself, and that very dear part of himself, his horses, whose dwelling was certainly far more commodious than their master's. His accommodations were simple enough. The dining-parlour, which might pass for his only sitting room,—

for the little dark den which he called his drawing-room was not entered three times a year,—the dining-parlour was a small square room, coloured pea-green with a gold moulding, adorned with a series of four prints on shooting, and four on hunting, together with two or three portraits of eminent racers, riders, hunters, and grooms. Guns and fishing-rods were suspended over the mantel-piece; powder-horns, shot-belts, and game-bags scattered about; a choice collection of flies for angling lay in one corner, whips and bridles in another, and a pile of books and papers,—Colonel Thornton's Tour, Daniel's Rural Sports, and a heap of Racing Calendars, occupied a third; Ponto and Carlo lay basking on the hearth-rug, and a famous little cocking spaniel, Flora by name, a conscious favourite, was generally stretched in state on an arm-chair.

Here, except when the owner was absent on a sporting expedition, which, between fishing, shooting, hunting, and racing, did, it must be confessed, happen pretty often; here his friends were sure to find a hearty welcome, a good beef-steak, (his old housekeeper was famous for cookery!) and as much excellent port and super-excellent Madeira (Tom, like most of his school, eschewed claret and other thin potations) as their host could prevail on them to swallow. Many a good fellow hath "heard the chimes at midnight" in this little room. Here Tom sat in his glory, telling interminable stories of his own exploits, and those of his dogs and horses; stories in every sense of the word, but yet as innocent as falsehoods well can be—in the first place, because they were always lies of vanity, not lies of malice, and could do harm to no creature upon earth;—in the second, because the orator, being somewhat lengthy and prosy, his hearers were apt to be troubled with "the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking," and seldom knew what he was talking about. Moreover, having told fibs of this sort all his life, I don't think he could help it; I don't even believe that he knew

when he did it, or that he could, to save his life, have separated the true from the false, in any one of his legends. He was incurable. It did not even hurt his conscience to be found out.

Such was Tom Hopkins ; and such, allowing for the difference of thirty years, Tom Hopkins is still. Some changes are however observable in that gallant sportsman, such changes as thirty years are wont to bring. He sits somewhat heavier in the saddle, and mounts somewhat seldomer,—has well nigh given up fishing and shooting,—has exchanged fox-hunting for coursing,—sold his hunters and purchased a staid roadster,—keeps a brace of greyhounds, of whose pedigree he vaunts much,—belongs to two coursing meetings, and swears every year that his dog was cheated out of the cup.

This is his winter amusement. In the summer he diverts himself like other idle gentlemen ; cons over the Sporting Magazine, and the newspaper of the day ; lounges to the inn to see the coaches change horses, and observes to a second whether the Regulator or the Defiance keeps time best ; or stands centinel in the garden, firing, from time to time, to keep the sparrows from the cherry trees. On wet days he is often seized with a fancy for mending and altering, and walks about the house, with a hammer sticking out of his pocket, doing no good, or a carpenter at his heels doing harm ; sometimes dozes in his easy chair, and sometimes complains of a twinge of the gout. He has nearly given up country visiting, but is a great man at the Cranley Club, where he tells longer stories than ever of the chases, the hounds, and the hunters of his youth ; of the great contested election ; of matchless belles, now, alas ! no more, and lords who have not left their fellow ; rails at the degeneracy of the times, the decline of beauty, the increase of dandyism, the adulteration of port wine, and the decrease of good fellowship ; gets half tipsy, and, finally, staggers home, escorted by his maid Dorothy, a rosy-cheeked damsel, of whose handiness and skill in cookery (his old house-keeper having

long been dead) he boasts almost as much as of the breed of his greyhounds, and whom the President of the Cranly Club has betted with his Vice, "that old Tom Hopkins," (so he irreverently calls him,) "with all his talk of duchesses and countesses, will marry before the year is out;" and truly I think so too.

A WIDOW GENTLEWOMAN.

I HAVE never had much acquaintance with a country town life, an ignorance which I regret exceedingly, not merely because such a life comprises so much of the intelligence, cultivation, and moral excellence of that most intelligent, cultivated, and excellent body of persons, the middle classes, as they are called, of England; but because, so far as authorship is concerned, it is decidedly the sphere which presents most novelty, and would be most valuable as affording a series of unhackneyed studies to an observer and delineator of common nature. To the novelist, indeed, an English provincial town offers ground almost untrodden; and the bold man who shall first adventure from the tempting regions of high life, or low life, or Irish life, or life abroad, or life in the olden times, into that sphere where he has hitherto found so many readers and so few subjects, will, if he write with truth and vividness, find his reward in the strong and clinging interest which we never fail to feel when every-day objects are presented to us under a new and striking form—the deep and genuine gratification excited by a union of the original and the familiar. But when will such an adventurer arise? Who shall dare to delineate the humours of an apothecary? or the parties of his wife? or the loves of his daughter? Who will have courage to make a hero of an attorney? or to throw the halo of imagination around the head of a country brewer? Alas! alas! until a grand literary reform shall take place, boroughs and county towns must be content to remain in obscurity, re-

presented in the House indeed, but absolute nullities in the library.

My acquaintance with the subject, slight as I have acknowledged it to be, has the further disadvantage of being almost wholly recollective, referring to persons who have long passed away, and to a state of things which I suspect has no present existence—for in country towns, as in other places, society has been progressing (if I may borrow that expressive Americanism) at a very rapid rate for the last twenty years; and when I go into the goodly streets of B. (where I still possess some few younger friends) I cannot help looking around me, and wondering whether the very race of my old acquaintance be not extinct with the individuals, or whether there be still a class of respectable elderly gentlewomen, who, with no apparent object or interest in life, do yet contrive to live, and to live happily, by the help of a little innocent gossiping, and a great deal of visiting and cards.

One of the most notable specimens of this class that I recollect—and I remember her as long as I can remember any thing—was my mother's old friend, Mrs. Nicholson. She was the childless widow of a former vicar of St. John's parish in B., and her husband's successor residing on another living, and the curate, a single man, preferring to board with a friend in the town, she still retained possession of the vicarage-house, in which she had presided for so many years, and which a limited but sufficient income enabled her to keep up on a small but comfortable scale. The house, indeed, was not of a sort to make any serious demands on her purse. It was a low, dark, dingy dwelling, situate in an angle between St. John's church and the lofty town-hall, the windows of which overtopped the very chimneys; enclosed within high walls, and looking out into a triangular court, where a few dusty poplars and yellow frost-bitten laurels combined to exclude the daylight from the little low rooms, whose small heavy sashes, of a glass older and thicker than common, afforded another pro-

tection against the beams of the blessed sun. The parlour in which she usually sat had also a triangular appearance, resulting from the chimney being placed in one corner—the little chimney faced with tiny Dutch tiles, divided by a small low brass fender from a narrow hearth-rug of Mrs. Nicholson's own work, the lion rampant in the middle of which was particularly like a sandy cat, and fronted by a very dark, very bright, very old-fashioned mahogany table, hardly large enough to hold the frame on which she performed her worsted embroidery. The opposite corner displayed a beauftet, adorned with ornamental glass and china in various states of preservation; one side boasted an old settee, and another an indescribable piece of furniture called a commode, consisting of three drawers of dark mahogany, perched upon long legs, and surmounted by four shelves enclosed within glass doors, and containing a miscellaneous collection of odds and ends, one half-shelf being filled with books, Fordyce's Sermons, Young's Night Thoughts, Mrs. Glass's Cookery, and other works placed there for show and use, and the rest filled with a stuffed parrot, a shell-work grotto, some specimens of spars and ores, particularly dusty, and a curious collection of filigree.

The usual inhabitants of this apartment were Mrs. Nicholson, a huge overgrown dame, dressed in a style which twenty years ago had been twenty years out of fashion, with powdered hair and fly-caps and lappets, and a black lace tippet, looking exactly like a head-dress cut out of an old pocket-book, all bustle and speechifying, and fidget and fuss; and a very sedate, demure, pale, sallow little woman, (every thing in the house was on a small scale except its mistress,) whom Mrs. Nicholson called Madge, but whose real name was Miss Day, and who filled an equivocal post in the household, half hand-maiden and half companion—or rather who performed the duties of both offices—dressing her lady, waiting upon her, combing her dog, and making up caps, lappets, and tippets, in the former capacity; and writing her notes, reading her to

sleep, sitting with her, and listening to her, (for with reply, or any thing that implied talking, Miss Day had little to do,) in the latter.

There they dwelt, Mrs. Nicholson and Miss Day, with the dog Viper, an astonishingly ugly terrier, most unnaturally fat, a little footboy in clerical livery, and an ancient maid of all work—there they lived, patterns of decorum, (even the boy Tom, and Viper the terrier, were most staid and orderly specimens of their usually obstreperous class;)—there they lived, with a regularity so punctual, that they might have set the church clock, had that important functionary been out of order, and the sun unwilling to present himself. At half-past seven they rose, at eight they breakfasted, at three they dined, at six they drank tea, at half-past six they sat down to cards, at half-past nine the pool (for quadrille was the game) finished as by instinct, and at ten precisely they went to bed. As the watchman called half-past ten they laid down, and before he cried eleven the whole household, from Mrs. Nicholson to Viper, might be fairly presumed to be at rest.

Sunday made little variation in this routine, except the episode of going to church, the change in the dinner hour from three to half-past one, and the substitution of Miss Day's reading the late doctor's manuscript sermons during the time which, on the other six days, was devoted to quadrille. The stock of sermons was not very large; and three hours' reading, weekly, soon got through them; but Mrs. Nicholson, to whom Miss Day once humbly and submissively suggested Blair, would by no manner of means consent to a change: and the good lady was right; she had been used to go to sleep to these sermons in the time of her late husband, of happy memory, and knew their quality. Blair might have kept her awake.

For the rest, Mrs. Nicholson was a good woman and a kind, fond of Viper, civil to her acquaintance, and tolerably considerate towards Miss Day; who, for as little as she looked like the heroine of a novel, had that prime requisite of one, which

consists in being in love; though whether that phrase may be applied to a twenty years' attachment, for such was the date of Miss Day's engagement to Mr. Thomas Cooke, writing-master in B., and parish-clerk of St. John's, may be doubtful. If fortune frowned, Mrs. Nicholson did not. She asked him how he did every Sunday, invited him to take a glass of wine every Christmas-day, and presented him with a kettle-holder of her own best worsted work, as a token of favour and remembrance.

In the duties of acquaintanceship Mrs. Nicholson was pre-eminent. Never was woman so regular in paying and returning visits, whether morning or evening—in sending to inquire after the sick, to condole on deaths, and congratulate on marriages. At the very moment prescribed by etiquette, (the etiquette of a country town many years ago,) the rat-tat-tat of the little foot-boy was heard at the door, and the pit-a-pat of the clogs, or the heavy clump of the sedan-chair—a much more dignified conveyance for a dowager of weight in the world than any of the race of flies, whether horse-fly or man-fly—resounded in the passage. She was the very pattern of all acquaintances.

But visiting, although it was much to her, was not quite all; she had something more of the salt of life to season her summer and winter worsted-work, in the shape of two sentiments, both excellent as preservatives from *ennui*—a close and ancient friendship, and a gentle, harmless, innocent, gentlewomanly, Mrs. Grundy sort of hatred. Nobody that had the honour of belonging to Mrs. Nicholson's society, but must have heard of Mrs. Quelch, her aversion, and Lady Daly, her friend. Mrs. Quelch was not, as in the course of things it seemed right that she should have been, her next neighbour; on the contrary, she lived fifty miles off, so completely out of the way, that it really seemed surprising how Mrs. Nicholson could manage to pick up, as pick up she did, so many stories about her; of the number of new bonnets she bought in the year,

and the number of servants she turned away—how she was cross to the governess, and spoiled the children—and how, above all, she prevented the doctor (for Mrs. Quelch was the wife of the then vicar of St. John's, and in some circumstance arising from that juxta-position, had arisen Mrs. Nicholson's enmity) from increasing Thomas Cooke's salary, and giving a new gown to the sexton. Well ! hatred and malice are, commonly speaking, very bad things, and far be it from me to enter into a general vindication of them. But in this particular instance I cannot help having a leaning towards the "simple sin ;" for it was certainly a great comfort and amusement to Mrs. Nicholson, and could do Mrs. Quelch no harm, that lady being, as I have good cause to believe, happily ignorant that such a sentiment was entertained towards her by the ex-vicereass of St. John's, and for the most part, I fear, entirely oblivious of the very existence of the personage in question. Why might not Mrs. Nicholson hate Mrs. Quelch ? especially as her expression of the feeling, and sometimes its affected suppression, were by far the most amusing parts of her conversation.

Her friendship for Lady Daly, although more amiable in itself, was, as far as her acquaintance were concerned, a much greater evil. Lady Daly's name, and Lady Daly's news, and Lady Daly's letters, were bores of the first magnitude. There was no escaping them either. It was impossible. As soon as you entered she begun with the name, and then she told you the news, and then (incredible barbarity !) after having told you every syllable of the contents, she inflicted on you the epistles in full—such epistles too ! Lady Daly seems to have been that astounding person—a sensible woman, a good sort of sensible woman ! and her letters were those tremendous compositions called sensible letters, well-written letters, excellent letters ! words of praise which, being translated, are commonly found to signify the most elaborate specimens of dulness that are to be met with out of print. Her ladyship's

epistles might pass for lessons on the art of amplification. It was wonderful how little meaning she could contrive to spread over four pages. They wanted even the seasoning of malice. Doubtless Mrs. Nicholson's answers were more amusing—she had Mrs. Quelch to hate. I know no harm of Lady Daly, poor woman, but I never saw one of her neat-looking packets, franked by her son Sir John, (the son's M. P.-ship had probably tended to make his mamma epistolary,) emerge from her correspondent's huge pocket without wishing them both in the Red Sea.

In other respects Mrs. Nicholson's conversation was pretty much like that of other elderly gentlewomen. She talked of her good husband, the doctor, and showed his portrait in a bracelet*—a faded miniature in full canonicals—displaying at the same time a chalk drawing of herself as a shepherdess, which had been taken at the same period by an artist of similar talent. She praised the weather of her youth, and abused that of the present time, as every body begins to do who has turned the point of forty; she was afraid of the opposition, and attached to the ministry; did not like the taxes, but hated the French; disliked new fashions; deprecated late hours; always petted Viper, and sometimes snubbed Miss Day.

* How fashions come round again! Many a fine lady now carries on her fair wrist, her husband's "picture in little," although the costume may be presumed to be somewhat different. Indeed, in these degenerate days, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to match the full swelling burly buzz wig, and the rustling bustling silk gown, redolent in every fold of clerical dignity, bearing the defunct owner's D. D.-ship on their very front. Nothing has been seen like them since the gown and wig of Dr. Parr.

CAROLINE CLEVELAND.

A SCHOOL-DAY ANECDOTE.

IN most great schools, as in other large assemblies of persons, one will generally be found, who, without being by any means the worst disposed or the most stupid, is yet in more scrapes, and oftener punished, than all the rest put together, and who comes at last to be pitied by every one but her teachers as thoroughly unlucky. They, indeed, go on punishing, partly on the theory so happily illustrated in Miss Edgeworth's delightful story of Murad, in her Popular Tales, that ill-luck is generally but another name for want of forethought—and unlucky, when applied to a school-girl, may be best translated careless—and partly on the principle which caused Frederick of Prussia, miscalled the Great, to punish the soldier whose hat was blown off by a high wind at a review. The sentence seemed abundantly unjust, but it produced the desired effect—the wind blew off no more hats.

Between twenty and thirty years ago, when I, a small damsel of twelve years old, or thereabout, was at Mrs. Meadows's respectable seminary for young ladies in Cadogan Place, the several parts of Miss Edgeworth's hero, Murad the unlucky, and Frederick of Prussia's unhatted soldier, were enacted by a young country-girl called Caroline Cleveland, the scapegoat of the school. Among the twenty select pupils to whom our governess bounded her cares, not one was half so often in trouble as Miss Cleveland. She tore more frocks, lost more gloves, blotted more books, blurred more drawings, than all the rest of the young ladies put together, and was, in short, a very by-word for indolence, awkwardness, and untidiness. Drawing-masters, writing-masters, music-masters, and dancing-masters, were never weary of complaining of her inattention; and, from the house-maid, as she dressed her,

grumbling at her for spoiling her clothes, to Mrs. Meadows, lecturing her for not knowing her lessons, poor Caroline was scolded and thwarted every day, and all day long.

Notwithstanding her faults, however, there was a pretty general feeling of liking for the culprit, even among those who scolded her most. There was something exceedingly disarming in the good humour of the poor little girl; her entire submission to reproof, the total absence of sullenness and self-justification towards her superiors, and the unenvying and affectionate disposition which she evinced towards her more fortunate companions. Generous, disinterested, and benevolent, she was full of that general good-will, that overflowing and warm-hearted kindness, which are so certain to be repaid in kind. It was impossible not to like one who was so ready to love, and so zealous to serve, every creature that came in her way. If there had been a prize for sweetness of temper, she would have had no competitor.

Another motive, too, caused more than usual interest to be felt for Miss Cleveland. Her father filled a high situation in one of our colonies; her mother and eldest sisters lived abroad with him; and Caroline, left in England for education, under the care of a worthy but rigid grand-aunt, who lived in far Northumberland, and whom she never saw from holidays to holidays, was regarded by those whose own dear parents lived near, and saw them frequently, with much of the pity due to an orphan. Such was the position of Caroline Cleveland at the time my story commences.

If any among her innumerable transgressions against the rules of the school might be accounted her besetting sin, it was speaking English. French was the universal language of the house, and an English mark was passed among the young ladies, transferred from culprit to culprit as they were detected in the fact, and called for three times a day, when the unlucky damsel who happened to be in possession of the badge was amerced in the sum of threepence; the collective

threepences being, every second day, transmuted into silver, and deposited in a money-box, a sort of mimic savings' bank, to be expended in a feast at the close of the half-year.

The usual wearer of this order of demerit—an oval piece of wood, with ENGLISH, in large capitals, engraven on its front, suspended by a riband from the neck—the common bearer of this unseemly decoration was poor Caroline, who never could take the trouble of talking French on the one hand, or find in her heart to listen after her fellow-talkers in English on the other; so that, being from her parents' absence not very amply supplied with cash, and her habitual thoughtlessness extending itself in a remarkable degree to the financial department, she had, at the date of our story, about a month before the holidays, not only arrived at the bottom of the purse which had been furnished to her for the half-year, but had actually contracted a debt amounting to the almost incredible sum of two guineas to that grand joint-stock property, the mark.

Not one of the shareholders but would most willingly have abandoned her part of the claim against the defaulter. Readily would the whole company have foregone all the luxuries of the mark-feast—the oranges, the almonds and raisins, the dried cherries, the candied angelica, the brioches, the macaroons, all the confections, French and English—with which that auspicious half-holiday was wont to be celebrated, as well as the orgeat, the capillaire, the *eau de groseille*, and even the two bottles of ginger wine—innocuous beverage!—the crowning two bottles that closed the banquet—readily would the whole festival have been abandoned rather than distress the universal favourite.

But the head teacher, who acted as a sort of trustee to the fund, felt it her duty to report the defalcation to Mrs. Meadows, who might be esteemed the president, or, at the least, a bank director; and she, in her turn, anxious to inculcate on the thoughtless offender the value of money, and the

wickedness, as well as misery, of debt, however incurred, resolved to make the present a lesson which should not soon be forgotten. Accordingly, she told her that the money must be paid before she went to her grand-aunt's for the holidays, a visit to which she had long looked forward with delight, as one of her sisters, recently married, was expected to meet her there from abroad—or that she must pass the holidays at school. But, aware how slight was her chance of obtaining the sum needed from her rigid, methodical guardian, who always, on sending her to school, supplied her stated pocket-money for the half-year, and would be horrified by such a demand for forfeits,—aware of her pecuniary situation, Mrs. Meadows added an offer that herself would pay the debt, and set down the money in Mr. Cleveland's bill, provided Caroline would get by heart the whole of *Athalie*.

The whole of *Athalie* ! Caroline, who never yet had managed to repeat correctly a fable of La Fontaine's, or a page of the *Henriade*, or even a chorus of *Esther*—to learn by rote the entire drama of *Athalie* ! The poor girl was in despair. Little did it comfort her that *Athalie* was the *chef-d'œuvre* of a great poet, written to please the wife of a great king, and acted by her pupils at an institution founded by herself. However the young *élèves* of St. Cyr might have gloried in the representation of *Athalie*, to Caroline it seemed only the dreariest and weariest task ever imposed upon school-girl. She discovered none of the imputed sublimity ; her uncritical eye could only scan the tremendous number of pages "where lines immeasurably spread"—those Alexandrines *are* atrocities—"seemed lengthening," as slowly and sadly she turned over the leaves. The poor little girl was inconsolable ; and we, her trusty comrades, stood pitying around her, longing to contribute our joint hoards to her relief in the way of loan or subsidy ; a desire which would certainly have been carried into effect, but that Mrs. Meadows, foreseeing the probability of a subscription being set on foot for so charitable a purpose, had positively prohibited the measure.

Poor dear Caroline! Just as she was turning over the leaves for the third time, tasking her arithmetic to reckon up the speeches and the lines, and vainly hoping to make them out to be fewer and shorter, we as vainly trying to insinuate hopes grounded on a projected general petition to Mrs. Meadows, from which we all knew that no hope could rationally be entertained—that lady's decisions being as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians—even at this dismal moment, as if to read us a practical lesson on the mutability of fortune, a packet arrived for Miss Cleveland from her sister, the bride, containing, besides the nuptial prettinesses of cake, and gloves, and silver favours, an affectionate note from her new brother, the bridegroom, together with a delicately wrought Indian purse, freighted with a golden guinea at either end.

Never was money so welcome! Who now so fortunate as Caroline? She uttered a cry of joy—almost a shriek; flung up to the ceiling the volume of Racine, containing *Athalie*, which, in its descent, touched, as I well remember, on my nose, as I happened to be looking up at the instant; and hastened to the head teacher to pay her debt, and be quit of the very thought of *Athalie*. Miss Stevens, the functionary in question, was not, however, at leisure to settle her account: she was just preparing to walk out with the school, and bade Miss Cleveland get ready as fast as she could, and put her money in her pocket until they returned from their promenade.

The walk, a dull and orderly procession of nicely-dressed and prim demoiselles, arranged in pairs, adjusted according to the height rather than the inclination of the parties, passed as monotonously as usual. But, on our return, Miss Stevens indulged us, and perhaps herself—for it was the very prime and flush of May, and the beauty and fragrance of the trees and flowering shrubs were almost irresistible—by a brief ramble in the delightful shades of the Cadogan Gardens. The half-hour's liberty was worth an age. The gay blossoms of the lilac, the laburnum, the double peach, and the double cherry, mingled their vivid colours with the tender green of

the young leaves. The morning had been rainy, and the light drops still glittered on the grass; the birds twittered among the branches; the bright sunshine and the balmy air shed their sweet influences around us; and we were returning, full of the joyous spirit of youth, quickened by this short taste of nature and of freedom, thinking of our own dear gardens and our country homes, when one of those miserable objects, seldom seen but in great cities, brought us back to London and its most painful associations.

Leaning against the iron palisade close beside the gate, stood a young woman with one child at her breast, and two others, emaciated and almost naked, clinging to her own squalid rags—a sad spectacle of human misery. She implored our charity, first in broken English, then in the *patois* of one of the southern provinces of France. Her looks and tears, and the famished appearance of the whole party, were more intelligible than her words. We gathered, however, that she was the wife of a French sailor, whose frigate had been captured by the English, and who was then imprisoned, with many hundreds of his countrymen, at Norman Cross; that a letter from one of his comrades had informed her that he was labouring under a mortal disorder; that she had prevailed on a smuggler, her relation, to land her and her children in England, that she might receive his last breath; that her little money had been expended on her road to London, whither she had travelled in hopes of finding a kind and wealthy Provençal, to whom she was furnished with letters, and who would, she was assured, forward her and her children to the prison, that her poor husband might bless them before he died; but that she had lost these letters of recommendation, and with them the address of her good countryman; and she had wandered about, friendless and homeless, a beggar in a foreign land, till now that all hopes of seeing her Henri had departed, and her only comfort was, that she and her little ones must soon die too. As she uttered the last mournful

words, the poor young woman pressed her baby closer to her bosom, and sank down on the pavement, with a gush of tears so suffocating and so passionate, that her very heart seemed bursting.

There is something in a real and a deep sorrow which goes straight to the feelings of youth. We crowded round the sufferer, in true though unavailing sympathy, and showered upon her the little money that we happened to have about us, or that the prudence of our conductress would allow. It was enough, and more than enough, to procure present support and decent lodging, but not sufficient to reclothe herself and her half-naked children, or to enable them to reach their place of destination; and, though received with the ardent thankfulness of her nation, our gift evidently excited more gratitude than joy. We continued round her, questioning her as to her plans, and the sum necessary for their accomplishment, until roused by a peremptory summons from the teacher, who crossed the street rapidly towards Mrs. Meadows's house—Caroline, who had taken an animated part in the discussion, lingering a moment behind, and joining us with some difficulty as we reached the hall-door.

On re-entering the school-room, Miss Stevens called for Miss Cleveland, and announced to her that she was then ready to receive her money, and settle the account of the mark. The little girl blushed and hesitated, and at last, picking up the volume of *Racine*, which she had tossed into the air two hours before, announced her intention of accepting Mrs. Meadows's kind offer, and learning *Athalie*. She was sure that by getting up at four o'clock every morning [N. B. She was always the latest riser in the school]—by being up every day at four o'clock, she was sure that she could do it, and she was sure that the task would do her good; she should be able to learn the common school lessons more easily another time. She would get *Athalie* by heart, with Mrs. Meadows's leave.

All at once the truth burst upon us. She had given her

two guineas to the Frenchwoman ! and on being questioned by Miss Stevens, she avowed the fact much in the style in which she might have confessed a great fault. She could not help it, she said, the poor young woman cried so ; and two guineas was the exact sum needed. Besides, she was sure that her sister, Gertrude, whose husband had sent her the money, would herself have given it if she had been there ; and that her papa would not mind its being charged in the bill, especially if he could but know how the poor young woman cried : her papa never liked to see people cry, if he could help them, especially foreigners in a strange land. She was sure that her sister and her father would not be angry for that, however they might blame her for speaking English and running in debt to the mark ; and, for her own part, she would rather learn *Athalie*—it was not so *very* long after all ; she was sure that she *could* learn it, and that the task would do her good.

And she *did* learn *Athalie* ; for Mrs. Meadows, whilst listening almost with tears to her generous resolution, was judicious enough to determine that she should earn her own approbation, as well as that of her friends, by completing the sacrifice. She did get up at four o'clock every morning to study *Athalie*, and the effect of this exertion, not only on her subsequent lessons, but on her habits and character, was salutary and permanent. She did learn *Athalie* ; and she had her reward ; for the poor Frenchwoman, for whom our good governess also interested herself, reached Norman Cross in safety, and found her husband recovering ; and the news arrived on the very morning of the mark-feast, at which Caroline Cleveland, her task completed, was chosen to preside, and over which she did preside, glowing, colouring, and smiling, the gayest and happiest of school-girls.

THE TOUCHY LADY.

ONE of the most unhappy persons whom it has been my fortune to encounter, is a pretty woman of thirty, or thereabout, healthy, wealthy, and of good repute, with a fine house, a fine family, and an excellent husband. A solitary calamity renders all these blessings of no avail :—the gentlewoman is touchy. This affliction has given a colour to her whole life. Her biography has a certain martial dignity, like the history of a nation ; she dates from battle to battle, and passes her days in an interminable civil war.

The first person who, long before she could speak, had the misfortune to offend the young lady, was her nurse ; then in quick succession four nursery maids, who were turned away, poor things ! because Miss Anne could not abide them ; then her brother Harry, by being born, and diminishing her importance ; then three governesses ; then two writing-masters ; then one music-mistress ; then a whole school. On leaving school, affronts multiplied of course ; and she has been in a constant miff with servants, tradespeople, relations, and friends ever since ; so that although really pretty, (at least she would be so if it were not for a standing frown and a certain watchful defying look in her eyes,) decidedly clever and accomplished, and particularly charitable, as far as giving money goes, (your ill-tempered woman has often that redeeming grace,) she is known only by her one absorbing quality of touchiness, and is dreaded and hated accordingly by every one who has the honour of her acquaintance.

Paying her a visit is one of the most formidable things that can be imagined, one of the trials which in a small way demand the greatest resolution. It is so difficult to find what

to say. You must make up your mind to the affair as you do when going into a shower bath. Differing from her is obviously pulling the string: and agreeing with her too often or too pointedly is nearly as bad; she then suspects you of suspecting her infirmity, of which she has herself a glimmering consciousness, and treats you with a sharp touch of it accordingly. But what is there that she will not suspect? Admire the colours of a new carpet, and she thinks you are looking at some invisible hole; praise the pattern of a morning cap, and she accuses you of thinking it too gay. She has an ingenuity of perverseness which brings all subjects nearly to a level. The mention of her neighbours is evidently *taboo*, since it is at least twenty to one but she is in a state of affront with nine-tenths of them; her own family are also *taboo* for the same reason. Books are particularly unsafe. She stands vibrating on the pinnacle where two fears meet, ready to be suspected of blue-stockings on the one hand, or of ignorance and frivolity on the other, just as the work you may chance to name happens to be recondite or popular; nay, sometimes the same production shall excite both feelings. "Have you read *Hajji Baba*," said I to her one day last winter, "*Hajji Baba the Persian*?"—"Really, Ma'am, I am no orientalist."—"Hajji Baba the clever Persian tale?" continued I, determined not to be daunted. "I believe, Miss M.," rejoined she, "that you think I have nothing better to do than to read novels." And so she snip-snaps to the end of the visit. Even the Scotch novels, which she does own to reading, are no resource in her desperate case. There we are shipwrecked on the rocks of taste. A difference there is fatal. She takes to those delicious books as personal property, and spreads over them the prickly shield of her protection in the same spirit with which she appropriates her husband and her children; is huffy if you prefer Guy Mannering to the Antiquary, and quite jealous if you presume to praise Jeanie Deans; thus cutting off his Majesty's lieges from the most approved topic of discus-

sion among civilized people, a neutral ground as open and various as the weather, and far more delightful. But what did I say? The very weather is with her no prudent word. She pretends to skill in that science of guesses commonly called weather-wisdom, and a fog, or a shower, or a thunder-storm, or the blessed sun himself, may have been rash enough to contradict her bodements, and put her out of humour for the day.

Her own name has all her life long been a fertile source of misery to this unfortunate lady. Her maiden name was Smythe, Anne Smythe. Now Smythe, although perfectly genteel and unexceptionable to look at, a pattern appellation on paper, was in speaking no way distinguished from the thousands of common Smiths who cumber the world. She never heard that "word of fear," especially when introduced to a new acquaintance, without looking as if she longed to spell it. Anne was bad enough; people had housemaids of that name, as if to make a confusion; and her grandmamma insisted on omitting the final *e*, in which important vowel was seated all it could boast of elegance or dignity; and once a brother of fifteen, the identical brother Harry, an Etonian, a Pickle, one of that order of clever boys who seem born for the torment of their female relatives, "foredoomed their *sister's* soul to cross," actually went so far as to call her Nancy! She did not box his ears, although how near her tingling fingers' ends approached to that consummation it is not my business to tell. Having suffered so much from the perplexity of her equivocal maiden name, she thought herself most lucky in pitching on the thoroughly well-looking and well-sounding appellation of Morley for the rest of her life. Mrs. Morley—nothing could be better. For once there was a word that did not affront her. The first alloy to this satisfaction was her perceiving on the bridal cards, Mr. and Mrs. B. Morley, and hearing that close to their future residence lived a rich bachelor uncle, till whose death that fearful diminution of her

consequence, the Mrs. B. must be endured. Mrs. B.! The brow began to wrinkle—but it was the night before the wedding, the uncle had made some compensation for the crime of being born thirty years before his nephew in the shape of a superb set of emeralds, and, by a fortunate mistake, she had taken it into her head that B., in the present case, stood for Basil, so that the loss of dignity being compensated by an increase of elegance, she bore the shock pretty well. It was not till the next morning, during the ceremony, that the full extent of her misery burst upon her, and she found that B. stood not for Basil, but for Benjamin. Then the veil fell off; then the full horror of her situation, the affront of being a Mrs. Benjamin, stared her full in the face; and certainly but for the accident of her being struck dumb by indignation, she never would have married a man so ignobly christened. Her fate has been even worse than then appeared probable; for her husband, an exceedingly popular and convivial person, was known all over his own county by the familiar diminutive of his ill-omened appellation; so that she found herself not merely a Mrs. Benjamin, but a Mrs. Ben., the wife of a Ben Morley, junior, Esq., (for the peccant uncle was also godfather and namesake,) the future mother of a Ben Morley the third.—Oh, the Miss Smith, the Ann, even the Nancy, shrunk into nothing when compared with that short word.

Neither is she altogether free from misfortunes on her side of the house. There is a terrible *mésalliance* in her own family. Her favourite aunt, the widow of an officer with five portionless children, became one fair morning the wife of a rich mercer in Cheapside, thus at a stroke gaining comfort and losing caste. The manner in which this affected poor Mrs. Ben Morley is inconceivable. She talked of the unhappy connexion, as aunts are wont to talk when nieces get paired at Gretna Green, wrote a formal renunciation of the culprit, and has considered herself insulted ever since if any one mentions a silk gown in her presence. Another affliction, brought

on her by her own family, is the production of a farce by her brother Harry (born for her plague) at Covent Garden Theatre. The farce was damned, as the author (a clever young Templar) declares, most deservedly. He bore the catastrophe with great heroism ; and celebrated its downfall by venting sundry good puns and drinking an extra bottle of claret ; leaving to Anne, sister Anne, the pleasant employment of fuming over his discomfiture—a task which she performed *con amore*. Actors, manager, audience, and author, seventeen newspapers, and three magazines, had the misfortune to displease her on this occasion ; in short, the whole town. Theatres and newspapers, critics and the drama, have been banished from her conversation ever since. She would as lieve talk of a silk-mercer.

Next after her visitors, her correspondents are to be pitied ; they had need look to their P's and Q's, their spelling and their stationery. If you write a note to her, be sure that the paper is the best double post, hot-pressed and gilt-edged ; that your pen is in good order ; that your "dear Madams" have a proper mixture of regard and respect ; and that your foldings and sealings are unexceptionable. She is of a sort to faint at the absence of an envelope, and to die of a wafer. Note, above all, that your address be perfect ; that your *to* be not forgotten ; that the offending *Benjamin* be omitted ; and that the style and title of her mansion, SHAWFORD MANOR HOUSE, be set forth in full glory. And when this is achieved, make up your mind to her taking some inexplicable affront after all. Thrice fortunate would he be who could put twenty words together without affronting her. Besides, she is great at a scornful reply, and shall keep up a quarrelling correspondence with any lady in Great Britain. Her letters are like challenges ; and, but for the protection of the petticoat, she would have fought fifty duels, and have been either killed or quieted long ago.

If her husband had been of her temper, she would have

brought him into twenty scrapes, but he is as unlike her as possible ; a good-humoured rattling creature, with a perpetual festivity of temper and a propensity to motion and laughter, and all sorts of merry mischief, like a schoolboy in the holidays, which felicitous personage he resembles bodily in his round, ruddy, handsome face, his dancing black eyes, curling hair, and light active figure, the youngest man that ever saw forty. His pursuits have the same happy juvenility. In the summer he fishes and plays cricket ; in the winter he hunts and courses ; and what with grouse and partridges, pheasants and woodcocks, wood-pigeons and flappers, he contrives pretty tolerably to shoot all the year round. Moreover, he attends revels, races, assizes, and quarter-sessions ; drives stage coaches, patronizes plays, is steward to concerts, goes to every dance within forty miles, and talks of standing for the county ; so that he has no time to quarrel with his wife or for her, and affronts her twenty times an hour simply by giving her her own way.

To the popularity of this universal favourite, for the restless sociability of his temper is invaluable in a dull country neighbourhood, his wife certainly owes the toleration which bids fair to render her incorrigible. She is fast approaching to the melancholy condition of a privileged person, one put out of the pale of civilized society. People have left off being angry with her, and begin to shrug up their shoulders and say it is her way, a species of placability which only provokes her the more. For my part, I have too great a desire to obtain her good opinion to think of treating her in so shabby a manner ; and as it is morally certain that we shall never be friends whilst we visit, I intend to try the effect of non-intercourse, and to break with her outright. If she reads this article, which is very likely, for she is addicted to new publications, and thinks herself injured if a book be put into her hands with the leaves cut,—if she reads only half a page she will inevitably have done with me for ever. If not, there can hardly be

any lack of a sufficient quarrel in her company ; and then when we have ceased to speak or to curtsy, and fairly sent each other to Coventry, there can be no reason why we should not be on as civil terms as if the one lived at Calcutta, and the other at New York.

JACK HATCH.

I PIQUE myself on knowing by sight, and by name, almost every man and boy in our parish, from eight years old to eighty—I cannot say quite so much for the women. They—the elder of them at least—are more within doors, more hidden. One does not meet them in the fields and highways ; their duties are close housekeepers, and live under cover. The girls, to be sure, are often enough in sight, “true creatures of the element,” basking in the sun, racing in the wind, rolling in the dust, dabbling in the water,—hardier, dirtier, noisier, more sturdy defiers of heat, and cold, and wet, than boys themselves. One sees them quite often enough to know them ; but then the little elves alter so much at every step of their approach to womanhood, that recognition becomes difficult, if not impossible. It is not merely growing,—boys grow ;—it is positive, perplexing, and perpetual change : a butterfly hath not undergone more transmogrifications in its progress through this life, than a village belle in her arrival at the age of seventeen.

The first appearance of the little lass is something after the manner of a caterpillar, crawling and creeping upon the grass, set down to roll by some tired little nurse of an elder sister, or mother with her hands full. There it lies—a fat, boneless, rosy piece of health, aspiring to the accomplishments of walking and talking ; stretching its chubby limbs ; scrambling and sprawling ; laughing and roaring ; there it sits, in all the dig-

nity of the baby, adorned in a pink-checked frock, a blue spotted pinafore, and a little white cap, tolerably clean, and quite whole. One is forced to ask if it be boy or girl; for these hardy country rogues are all alike, open-eyed, and weather-stained, and nothing fearing. There is no more mark of sex in the countenance than in the dress.

In the next stage, dirt-incrusted enough to pass for the chrysalis, if it were not so very unquiet, the gender remains equally uncertain. It is a fine, stout, curly-pated creature of three or four, playing and rolling about, amongst grass or mud, all day long; shouting, jumping, screeching—the happiest compound of noise and idleness, rags and rebellion, that ever trod the earth.

Then comes a sun-burnt gipsy of six, beginning to grow tall and thin, and to find the cares of the world gathering about her; with a pitcher in one hand, a mop in the other, an old straw bonnet of ambiguous shape, half hiding her tangled hair; a tattered stuff petticoat, once green, hanging below an equally tattered cotton frock, once purple; her longing eyes fixed on a game of baseball at the corner of the green, till she reaches the cottage door, flings down the mop and pitcher, and darts off to her companions, quite regardless of the storm of scolding with which the mother follows her run-away steps.

So the world wags till ten; then the little damsel gets admission to the charity school, and trips mincingly thither every morning, dressed in the old-fashioned blue gown, and white cap, and tippet, and bib and apron of that primitive institution, looking as demure as a Nun, and as tidy; her thoughts fixed on button-holes and spelling-books—those ensigns of promotion; despising dirt and baseballs, and all their joys.

Then at twelve the little lass comes home again, uncapped, untippeted, unschooled; brown as a berry, wild as a colt, busy as a bee—working in the fields, digging in the garden, frying rashers, boiling potatoes, shelling beans, darning stock-

ings, nursing children, feeding pigs ;—all these employments varied by occasional fits of romping and flirting, and idle play, according as the nascent coquetry, or the lurking love of sport, happens to preponderate ; merry, and pretty, and good with all her little faults. It would be well if a country girl could stand at thirteen. Then she is charming. But the clock will move forward, and at fourteen she gets a service in a neighbouring town ; and her next appearance is in the perfection of the butterfly state, fluttering, glittering, inconstant, vain,—the gayest and gaudiest insect that ever skimmed over a village green. And this is the true progress of a rustic beauty, the average lot of our country girls ; so they spring up, flourish, change, and disappear. Some indeed marry and fix amongst us, and then ensues another set of changes, rather more gradual perhaps, but quite as sure, till grey hairs, wrinkles, and linsey-woolsey wind up the picture.

All this is beside the purpose. If woman be a mutable creature, man is not. The wearers of smock frocks, in spite of the sameness of the uniform, are almost as easily distinguished by an interested eye, as a flock of sheep by the shepherd, or a pack of hounds by the huntsman : or, to come to less affronting similes, the members of the House of Commons by the Speaker, or the gentlemen of the bar by the Lord Chief Justice. There is very little change in them from early boyhood. “The child is father to the man” in more senses than one. There is a constancy about them ; they keep the same faces, however ugly ; the same habits, however strange ; the same fashions, however unfashionable ; they are in nothing new-fangled. Tom Coper, for instance, man and boy, is and has been addicted to posies,—from the first polyanthus to the last china rose, he has always a nosegay in his button-hole ; George Simmons may be known a mile off, by an eternal red waistcoat ; Jem Tanner, summer and winter, by the smartest of all smart straw hats ; and Joel Brent, from the day that he left off petticoats, has always, in every dress and every situa-

tion, looked like a study for a painter—no mistaking him. Yes! I know every man and boy of note in the parish, with one exception—one most singular exception, which “haunts, and startles, and waylays” me at every turn. I do not know, and I begin to fear that I never shall know, Jack Hatch.

The first time I had occasion to hear of this worthy was on a most melancholy occurrence. We have lost—I do not like to talk about it, but I cannot tell my story without—we have lost a cricket match, been beaten, and soundly too, by the men of Beech-hill, a neighbouring parish. How this accident happened, I cannot very well tell; the melancholy fact is sufficient. The men of Beech-hill, famous players, in whose families cricket is an hereditary accomplishment, challenged and beat us. After our defeat, we began to comfort ourselves by endeavouring to discover how this misfortune could possibly have befallen. Every one that has ever had a cold must have experienced the great consolation that is derived from puzzling out the particular act of imprudence from which it sprang, and we, on the same principle, found our affliction somewhat mitigated by the endeavour to trace it to its source. One laid the catastrophe to the wind—a very common scapegoat in the catarrhal calamity—which had, as it were, played us booty, carrying our adversaries’ balls right and ours wrong; another laid it to a certain catch missed by Tom Willis, by which means Farmer Thackum, the pride and glory of the Beech-hillers, had two innings; a third to the aforesaid Thackum’s remarkable manner of bowling, which is circular, so to say, that is, after taking aim, he makes a sort of chassée on one side, before he delivers his ball, which pantomimic motion had a great effect on the nerves of our eleven, unused to such quadrilling; a fourth imputed our defeat to the over-civility of our umpire, George Gosseltine, a sleek, smooth, silky, soft-spoken person, who stood with his little wand under his arm, smiling through all our disasters—the very image of peace and good-humour; whilst their umpire, Bob Cox, a royster-

ing, roaring, bullying blade, bounced, and hectored, and blustered from his wicket, with the voice of a twelve-pounder ; the fifth assented to this opinion, with some extension, asserting that the universal impudence of their side took advantage of the meekness and modesty of ours, (N. B. it never occurred to our modesty, that they might be the best players,) which flattering persuasion appeared likely to prevail, in fault of a better, when all on a sudden, the true reason of our defeat seemed to burst at once from half a dozen voices, re-echoed like a chorus by all the others—"It was entirely owing to the want of Jack Hatch ! How could we think of playing without Jack Hatch !"

This was the first I heard of him. My inquiries as to this great player were received with utter astonishment. "Who is Jack ?" "Not know Jack Hatch !" There was no end of the wonder—"not to know him, argued myself unknown." "Jack Hatch—the best cricketer in the parish, in the county, in the country ! Jack Hatch, who had got seven notches at one hit ! Jack Hatch, who had trolled, and caught out a whole eleven ! Jack Hatch, who, besides these marvellous gifts in cricket, was the best bowler and the best musician in the hundred,—could dance a hornpipe and a minuet, sing a whole song-book, bark like a dog, mew like a cat, crow like a cock, and go through Punch from beginning to end ! Not know Jack Hatch !"

Half ashamed of my non-acquaintance with this Admirable Crichton of rural accomplishments, I determined to find him out as soon as possible, and I have been looking for him more or less ever since.

The cricket-ground and the bowling-green were of course the first places of search ; but he was always just gone, or not come, or he was there yesterday, or he is expected to-morrow—a to-morrow which, as far as I am concerned, never arrives ;—the stars were against me. Then I directed my attention to his other acquirements ; and once followed a ballad-singer

half a mile, who turned out to be a strapping woman in a man's great coat ; and another time pierced a whole mob of urchins to get at a capital Punch—when behold it was the genuine man of puppets, the true squeakery, the “real Simon Pure,” and Jack was as much to seek as ever.

At last I thought that I had actually caught him, and on his [own peculiar field, the cricket-ground. We abound in rustic fun, and good humour, and of course in nick-names. A certain senior of fifty, or thereabout, for instance, of very juvenile habits and inclinations, who plays at ball, and marbles, and cricket with all the boys in the parish, and joins a kind merry buoyant heart to an aspect somewhat rough and careworn, has no other appellation that ever I heard but “Uncle ;” I don't think, if by any strange chance he were called by it, that he would know his own name. On the other hand, a little stunted pragmatistical urchin, son and heir of Dick Jones, an absolute old man cut shorter, so slow, and stiff, and sturdy, and wordy, passes universally by the title of “Grandfather”—I have not the least notion that he would answer to Dick. Also a slim, grim-looking, white-headed lad, whose hair is bleached, and his skin browned by the sun, till he is as hideous as an Indian idol, goes, good lack ! by the pastoral misnomer of the “Gentle Shepherd.” Oh manes of Allan Ramsay ! the Gentle Shepherd !

Another youth, regular at cricket, but never seen except then, of unknown parish, and parentage, and singular uncouthness of person, dress, and demeanour, rough as a badger, ragged as a colt, and sour as verjuice, was known, far more appropriately, by the cognomen of “Oddity.” Him, in my secret soul, I pitched on for Jack Hatch. In the first place, as I had in the one case a man without a name, and in the other a name without a man, to have found these component parts of individuality meet in the same person, to have made the man to fit the name, and the name fit the man, would have been as pretty a way of solving two enigmas at once,

as hath been heard of since Œdipus his day. But besides the obvious convenience and suitability of this belief, I had divers other corroborating reasons. Oddity was young, so was Jack ;—Oddity came up the hill from leaward, so must Jack ;—Oddity was a capital cricketer, so was Jack ;—Oddity did not play in our unlucky Beech-hill match, neither did Jack ;—and last of all, Oddity's name was Jack, a fact I was fortunate enough to ascertain from a pretty damsel who walked up with him to the ground one evening, and who, on seeing him bowl out Tom Coper, could not help exclaiming in soliloquy, as she stood a few yards behind us, looking on with all her heart, "Well done, Jack !" That moment built up all my hopes ; the next knocked them down. I thought I had clutched him, but willing to make assurance doubly sure, I turned to my pretty neighbour, (Jack Hatch too had a sweet-heart,) and said in a tone, half affirmative, half interrogatory, "That young man who plays so well is Jack Hatch ?"—"No, ma'am, Jack Bolton !" and Jack Hatch remained still a sound, a name, a mockery.

Well ! at last I ceased to look for him, and might possibly have forgotten my curiosity, had not every week produced some circumstance to relumine that active female passion.

I seemed beset by his name, and his presence, invisibly as it were. Will o' the wisp is nothing to him ; Puck, in that famous Midsummer Dream, was a quiet goblin compared to Jack Hatch. He haunts one in dark places. The fiddler, whose merry tones come ringing across the orchard in a winter's night from Farmer White's barn, setting the whole village a dancing, is Jack Hatch. The whistler, who trudges homeward at dusk up Kibe's lanes, out-piping the nightingale, in her own month of May, is Jack Hatch. And the indefatigable learner of the bassoon, whose drone, all last harvest, might be heard in the twilight, issuing from the sexton's dwelling on the Little Lea, "making night hideous," that iniquitous practiser is Jack Hatch.

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The name meets me all manner of ways. I have seen it in the newspaper for a prize of pinks ; and on the back of a warrant on the charge of poaching ;—N. B. the constable had my luck, and could not find the culprit, otherwise I might have had some chance of seeing him on that occasion. Things the most remote and discrepant issue in Jack Hatch. He caught Dame Wheeler's squirrel ; the Magpie at the Rose owes to him the half-dozen phrases with which he astounds and delights the passers by ; the very dog Tero,—an animal of singular habits, who sojourns occasionally at half the houses in the village, making each his home till he is affronted—Tero himself, best and ugliest of finders—a mongrel compounded of terrier, cur, and spaniel—Tero, most remarkable of ugly dogs, inasmuch as he constantly squints, and commonly goes on three legs, holding up first one, and then the other, out of a sort of quadrupedal economy to ease those useful members—Tero himself is said to belong of right and origin to Jack Hatch.

Every where that name meets me. 'Twas but a few weeks ago that I heard him asked in church, and a day or two afterwards I saw the tail of the wedding procession, the little lame clerk handing the bridemaid, and a girl from the Rose running after them with pipes, passing by our house. Nay, this very morning, some one was speaking—Dead ! what dead ? Jack Hatch dead ?—a name, a shadow, a Jack o' lantern ! Can Jack Hatch die ? Hath he the property of mortality ? Can the bell toll for him ? Yes ! there is the coffin and the pall—all that I shall ever see of him is there !—There are his comrades following in decent sorrow—and the poor pretty bride, leaning on the little clerk.—My search is over—Jack Hatch is dead !

THE VICAR'S MAID.



ABOUT three years ago, our neighbouring village, the little hamlet of Aberleigh, received one of the greatest blessings which can befall a country parish, in the shape of an active, pious, and benevolent Vicar. Chaucer shall describe him for me, for I prefer the real words of the old poet, to the more elaborate and ornamented version of Dryden :

“ A good man ther was of religioun,
 That was a poure parson of a toun ;
 But riche he was of holy thought, and werk ;
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche ;
 His parishens devoutly wolde he teche ;
 Benigne he was and wonder diligent
 And in adversite ful patient ;
 And swiche he was yproved often sithes
 Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,
 But rather wolde he geven out of doute
 Unto his poure parishens aboute
 Of his offring, and eke of his substance ;
 He coude in litel thing have suffisance.

Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,
 But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder
 In sikeness and in mischief to visite
 The feuest in his parish moche and lite,
 Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf:
 This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,
 That first he wrought and afterward he taught;
 Out of the gospel he the wordes caught.—
 And though he holy were, and vertuous
 He was to sinful men not dispitous,
 Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,
 But in his teching discrete and benigne.
 To drawen folk to heven with fairnesse,
 By good ensample was his businesse;
 But if were any persone obstinat,
 What so he were of highe or low estat,
 Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones,
 A better preest I trowe that no wher non is,
 He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
 Ne maked him no spiced conscience;
 But Cristes lore and his apostles twelve
 He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.”

Prologue to the CANTERBURY TALES.

Such was Mr. Mansfield. And he brought to Aberleigh a still greater blessing than the Roman Catholic Priest of Chaucer could do, (although, by the way, the old bard was a follower of Wickliffe, the herald of the Reformation,) in a wife, as good as himself; two lively, promising girls; and a rosy, frank-hearted boy, quite worthy of such parents. One shall seldom see together a finer family, for our “gode parson” was not only “lite of foot,” a man in the prime of life, full of vigour and activity, but united the intellectual countenance of the scholar, to the elegance and polish of a gentleman. Mrs. Mansfield was remarkably pretty; and the young people had about them all the glow and the brightness of their fresh and happy age. But the beauty of the vicarage, the beauty of the parish, was a female servant who accompanied them, their maid Mary. She was five or six and twenty,

and looked as much ; of middle height, and middle size, rather inclining to the fulness and luxuriance of womanhood ; fair, blooming, smiling, and bright-eyed, yet with an expression so chastised, so perfected by modesty, that no one could look on her without being sure that she was as good as she was lovely. Her voice, and dress, and manner too, were all in keeping with her sweet face, gentle, quiet, and retiring. In short, she had not been a week in the village, before all the neighbours were asking each other—"Have you seen the vicar's pretty maid?"

The home which received this delightful family was every way worthy of its inhabitants. A country parsonage is generally in itself and its associations a happy mixture of the unpretending and the comfortable ; and of all parsonages Aberleigh is the most beautiful. It stands amidst a labyrinth of green lanes, running through a hilly and richly wooded country, whose valleys are threaded by the silver Loddon. On one side is the magnificent wreck of a grand, but deserted mansion-house, built with porch and pinnacle, and rich Gothic windows, in the style of Elizabeth's day ; on the other the old village church ; its tower fancifully ornamented with brick-work, and the church-yard planted with broad flowering limes and funereal yew-trees ; leading up to the church, a short avenue of magnificent oaks ; and behind the avenue, and divided from the lane by a considerable space, partly lawn, partly court, and partly flower-garden, stands the vicarage.

The house is a low irregular building, covered to the very roof with creeping shrubs, roses, woodbine, jessamine, clematis, and myrtles, flowering into the very chamber windows,—such myrtles as were never before seen in this part of England. One of them died in the hard winter, twelve years ago, and a chair and a stool were made of the wood. It took no polish, but still it had a pretty look and a pretty name ; that English myrtle, it almost sounded like a contradiction. The garden is just suited to the house ; large squares of fine turf, with beds and borders of flowers divided by low box hedges, so

thick, and broad, and level, that you might walk on them two abreast; with a long piece of water, in one compartment, stocked with gold and silver fish; a tall yew hedge, fencing off the kitchen garden, and a sun-dial rising from the green turf opposite the house,—that voiceless monitor, whose silence is so eloquent, and whose gliding finger realizes, and perhaps suggested the sublime personification of Wordsworth—"Time the Shadow."

The Mansfields were exceedingly struck with their new habitation. They had hitherto resided on the coast of Sussex, the South Downs; so that accustomed to those green hills, and the fertile, but unsheltered plains beyond them, the absolute nakedness of the land, and the vast and bare expanse of the ocean, they were almost as much unaccustomed to trees as a negro to snow, and first wondered at, then complained of, and at last admired, our richly wooded valleys, and the remains of old chases, and bits of wild forest scenery, in which we abound. The artlessness with which these feelings were confessed, added a fresh charm to this interesting family. There is always something very attractive in the ignorance of any particular subject which we sometimes meet with amongst clever and cultivated people. Their questions are so intelligent, so poignant, so (to use a bold phrase) full of answers. They instruct our knowledge, and make us feel far more sensibly that which we teach. It was the pleasantest thing in the world to walk through Aberleigh wood with Clara Mansfield, and Evelyn's Sylva, showing her, by the help of that delightful book, the differences of form and growth, and bark and foliage; sometimes half puzzled myself by some freak of nature, or oftener forgetting our avowed object in admiration of the pictorial beauty, the varied colouring, the play of light and shadow, and the magical perspective of that delightful spot.

The young people caught my enthusiasm, and became almost as completely foresters, as the half-wild ponies, who

owned the name, or the still wilder donkeys, whom we used to meet in the recesses of the wood, and whose picturesque forms and grouping added the interest of life and motion to the landscape.

All the family became denizens of Aberleigh wood, except Mary, who continued a perfect Nereide, constant to the coast to a degree that rendered her quite unjust to our inland scenery. She languished under the reverse disease of a Calenture, pined for the water, and was literally, and in a new sense of the word, sea-sick. To solace her malady, she would sometimes walk across the park to the Loddon, especially at sun-set; for to hear Mary, any one would have thought that that bright luminary never did make a set worth talking of, except when he could look at himself in a watery mirror: and then, when she reached the Loddon, provoked at the insufficiency of the spectacle, she would turn back without vouchsafing a second glance, although it is but justice to that poetical river to declare, that at Aberleigh bridge it is as broad, as glassy, and as beautiful a stream, as ever the sun showed his face in, with much of the character of a lake; but Ullswater or Winandermere, would have fared equally ill with Mary; nothing but the salt sea could content her.

It was soon obvious that our inland beaux were no better suited to her taste than our inland scenery. Half the young men in the village offered her suit and service. First, George Ellis the farrier, a comely youth and well to do in the world, who kept an apprentice and a journeyman, a horse and cart, two greyhounds, three spaniels, and one pointer, being indeed by many degrees the keenest sportsman in these parts;—George Ellis proffered to make her mistress of himself, his household, his equipage, and his stud; but was civilly rejected. The next candidate who presented himself was Ben Appleton, the son of a neighbouring farmer; Ben Appleton is a wag, and has a face and figure proper to the vocation; a shape, tall, stout, and square, that looks stiff, and is active;

with a prodigious power of putting himself into all manner of out-of-the-way attitudes, and of varying and sustaining this pantomime to an extent that really seems inexhaustible. The manner in which he can, so to say, transpose that sturdy form of his, put his legs where his arms should be, and his arms in the place of his legs, walk on his hands, stand on his head, tumble, hop, and roll, might raise some envy in Grimaldi himself. His features are under the same command. Originally I suspect him to have been good-looking; but who can ever say that he has seen Ben Appleton's real face? He has such a roll of the eye, such a twist of the nose, such a power of drawing to either ear that broad mouth, filled with strong white teeth. His very talk is more like a piece of a laugh, than the speech of an ordinary man; and his actions have all the same tendency—full of fun with a dash of mischief. But Ben is a privileged person, an universal favourite; and Mary, never dreaming of such a catastrophe as his falling in love, used to contemplate his tricks from afar, with something of the same amusement which she might have felt in watching a kitten or a monkey. For a long time he made his addresses with impunity; unsuspected and unrepelled; no one believed him in earnest. At last, however, Ben and his case became serious, and then Mary became serious too; he received a firm though gentle dismissal, and looked grave for a whole week. Next came Aaron Keep the shoemaker, the wisest man in the parish, noted all over the country for his knowledge of the stars, and judgment in the weather, and almost as notorious for his aversion to matrimony and his contempt for women. Aaron was said to have been jilted in his youth, which soured a kindly temper and put mistrust into his heart. Him, even him, did Mary's beauty and Mary's modesty vanquish. He, who had been abusing the sex for the last forty years, actually made her an offer. I suppose the happiest moment of his life must have been that in which she refused him. One can fancy him trembling over the narrow-

ness of his escape, like the man who did not fall over Dover Cliff—but the offer was made.

The cause of all this obduracy at last appeared. A young sailor arrived at the vicarage, whom the most graphical of our poets shall assist me in describing :

“ Fresh were his features, his attire was new ;
Clean was his linen, and his jacket blue ;
Of finest jean his trowsers, tight and trim,
Brush'd the large buckle at the silver rim.”—CRABBE.

He arrived at the vicarage towards the end of winter, and was introduced by Mary to mine hostess of the Eight Bells as her half-brother ; although Mary was so little used to telling fibs, that her blushes, and downcast looks and smiles between, in short, the whole pervading consciousness would have betrayed her, as Mrs. Jones, the landlady, observed, to any one who had but half an eye ; to say nothing of Miss Clara's arch look as she passed them. Never was half-brother so welcomed ; and in good truth he was well worthy of his welcome.

Thomas Clere was an exceedingly fine young man, of six or seven and twenty, with a head of curly black hair, a sun-burnt complexion, a merry open countenance, and a bluff hearty voice that always sounded as if transmitted through a speaking-trumpet. He established himself at the Eight Bells, and soon became very popular in that respectable hostelry. Besides his good humour, his liberality, and his sea jokes, next to Irish jokes always the most delightful to rustic ears, perhaps because next to Irish the least intelligible—your country bumpkin loves a conundrum, and laughs heartiest at what he does not understand ;—besides these professional qualifications, Thomas was eminently obliging and tolerably handy ; offered his assistance in every emergency, and did more good and less harm than most amateur helpers, who, generally speaking, are the greatest hinderances under the sun. Thomas was really useful. To be sure, when engaged in aiding Mary, a few casualties did occur from pre-occupa-

tion ; once, for instance, they contrived to let down a whole line of clothes which he had been assisting to hang out. Neither party could imagine how the accident happened, but the washing was forced to be done over again. Another time, they, between them, overset the milk bucket, and the very same day so overheated the oven that a whole batch of bread and three apple-pies were scorched to a cinder. But Thomas was more fortunate with other coadjutors. He planted a whole patch of cabbages in a manner perfectly satisfactory, and even made a very decent cucumber-bed in mine host's garden. He churned Mrs. Jones's butter as well as Mary herself could have done it. He shaped bats and cut wickets for the great boys, plaited wicker baskets for the younger ones, and even dug a grave for the sextoness, an old woman of eighty, the widow of a former sexton, who held that office (corruptly, as our village radicals were wont to say) in conjunction with that of pew-opener, and used to keep the children in order by one nod of her grey head, and to compound for the vicar every Sunday a nosegay of the choicest flowers of the season. Thomas, although not very fond of the job, dug a grave, to save sixpence for poor Alice. Afterwards this kindness was thought ominous.

No wonder that our seaman was popular. The only time he got into a scrape at Aberleigh was with two itinerant showmen, who called themselves sailors, but who were, Thomas was sure, "nothing but land lubbers," and who were driving about an unhappy porpoise in a wheelbarrow, and showing it at two-pence a head, under the name of a sea pig. Thomas had compassion on the creature of his own element, who was kept half alive by constant watering, and threatened to fight both the fellows unless they promised to drive it instantly back to the sea ; which promise was made, and broken, as he might have expected, if a breach of promise could ever enter into a sailor's conception. Our sailor was too frank even to maintain his Mary's maidenly artifice, and had so

many confidants, that before Mr. Mansfield published the banns of marriage between Thomas Clere and Mary Howell, all the parish knew that they were lovers.

At last the wedding-day came. Aaron Keep left his work to take a peep at the bride, and Ben Appleton paid her the high compliment of playing no trick either on her or the bridegroom. How beautiful she looked in her neat and delicate dress, her blushes and her smiles ! The young ladies of the vicarage, with whose family she had lived from childhood, went to church with her, and every body cried as usual on such occasions. Clara, who had never been at a wedding before, had resolved against crying ; but tears are contagious things, and poor Clara's flowed, she did not well know why. This too was afterwards thought an ill omen.

Thomas and Mary had hired a room for a week in a neighbouring town, after which she was to return for a while to her good master and mistress ; and he was to go to sea again in the good merchant ship, the *Fair Star*. To go to sea again for one last voyage, and then to return rich, quite rich for their simple wishes, (Thomas's savings already yielded an income of twelve shillings a week,) set up in some little trade, and live together all the rest of their lives—such were their humble plans. They found their short honeymoon, passed in a strange place, and in idleness, a little long I fancy, in spite of true love, as greater people have done before them. Yet Mary would willingly have remained even under the sad penalty of want of occupation, rather than part with Thomas for the sea, which now first began to appear formidable in her eyes. But Thomas had promised, and must go on this one last voyage to Canada ; he should be home in six months, six months would soon be gone, and then they would never part again. And so he soothed, and comforted, and finally brought her back to the vicarage, and left her there ; and she, when the trial came, behaved as well as possible. Her eyes were red, to be sure, for a week or two, and she would turn pale when pray-

ing for "those who travel by land or by water," but still she was calm, and cheerful, and apparently happy.

An accident about six weeks after their separation, first disturbed her tranquillity. She contrived, in cutting a stick to tie up a tree carnation belonging to her dear Miss Clara, to lacerate very considerably the third finger of her left hand. The injury was so serious, that the surgeon insisted on the necessity of sawing off the ring, the wedding-ring ! She refused. The hurt grew worse and worse. Still Mary continued obstinate, in spite of Mrs. Mansfield's urgent remonstrances ; at length it came to the point of sawing off the ring or the finger, and then, and not till then, not till Mr. Mansfield had called to aid all the authority of a master, did she submit—evidently with more reluctance and more pain than she would have felt at an amputation. The finger got well, and her kind mistress gave her her own mother's wedding-ring to supply the place of the severed one,—but it would not do ;—a superstitious feeling had seized her, a strange vague remorse ; she spoke of her compliance as sinful ; as if by divesting herself of the symbol she had broken the marriage tie. Our good vicar reasoned with her, and Clara laughed, and she listened mildly and sweetly, but without effect. Her spirits were gone ; and a fear, partly superstitious, partly perhaps inevitable, when those whom we love are absent, and in danger, had now seized Mary Clere.

The summer was wet and cold, and unusually windy, and the pleasant rustling of that summer breeze amongst the lime-trees, the very tapping of the myrtles against the casement, as they waved in the evening air, would send a shiver through her whole frame. She strove against this feeling, but it mastered her. I met her one evening at the bridge, (for she had now learned to love our gentle river,) and spoke to her of the water lilies, which, in their pure and sculptural beauty, almost covered the stream. "Yes, Ma'am," said poor Mary, "but they are melancholy flowers for all their prettiness ;

they look like the carved marble roses over the great tomb in the chancel, as if they were set there for monuments for the poor creatures that perish by the waters"—and then with a heavy sigh she turned away, happily for me, for there was no answering the look and the tone.

So, in alternations of "fear and trembling hope," passed the summer; her piety, her sweetness, and her activity, continued unabated, perhaps even increased; and so in truth was her beauty; but it had changed its character. She was thinner, paler, and far, far sadder. So, in augmented fear, passed the autumn. At the end of August he was to have returned; but August was gone,—and no news of him. September crept slowly away, and still no word of Thomas. Mary's dread now amounted to agony. At length, about the middle of October, a letter arrived for Mr. Mansfield. Mary's eye caught the post-mark, it was that of the port from whence her husband sailed. She sank down in the little hall, not fainting, but unable to speak or move, and had only strength to hold out the letter to Clara, who ran to her on hearing her fall. It was instantly opened, and a cry of inexpressible horror announced the news. The good ship *Fair Star* was missing. She had parted company from several other vessels on her homeward voyage, and never been heard of since. All hope was over, and the owner of the *Fair Star*, from whom the letter came, enclosed a draft for the wages due to the deceased. Poor Mary! she did not hear that fatal word. The fatal sense had smitten her long before, as with a sword. She was carried to bed in a state of merciful suspension of suffering, and passed the night in the heavy and troubled sleep that so often follows a stunning blow. The next morning she awoke.—Who is so happy as not to know that dreadful first-waking under the pressure of a great sorrow?—the vague and dizzying sense of misery we know not why? the bewildering confusion of memory? the gradual recollection? and then the full and perfect woe that rushes in such a flood over the heart? who is so

happy as not to have known this bitterness?—Poor Mary felt it sorely, suffocatingly: but she had every support that could be afforded. Mr. Mansfield read to her, and prayed with her. His excellent family soothed her and wept with her. And for two days she seemed submissive and resigned. On the third she begged to see the fatal letter, and it acted with the shock of electricity. “Missing! only missing!—He was alive—she was sure he was alive.” And this idea possessed her mind, till hope became to her a worse poison than her old torturer, fear. She refused to put on the mourning provided for her, refused to remain in the tranquillity of her own apartment; and went about talking of life and happiness, with the very look of death. A hundred times a day she read that letter, and tried to smile, and tried to believe that Thomas still lived. To speak of him as dead, seemed to her raised feelings like murder. She tried to foster the faint spark of hope, tried to deceive herself, tried to prevail on others: but all in vain. Her mind was evidently yielding under this tremendous struggle, this perpetual and never-ceasing combat against one mighty fear. The sense of her powerless suspense weighed her heart down. When I first saw her, it seemed as if twenty years of anguish and sickness had passed over her head in those ten days; she was shrunken, and bent, and withered, like a plant plucked up by the roots. Her soft pleasant voice was become low, and hoarse, and muttering; her sweet face haggard and ghastly; and yet she said she was well, tried to be cheerful, tried to smile—oh, I shall never forget that smile!

These false spirits soon fled; but the mind was too unsettled, too infirm for resignation. She wandered about night and day; now weeping over the broken wedding-ring; now haunting the church-yard, sitting on the grave, *his* grave. Now hanging over the brimming and vapoury Loddon, pale as the monumental lilies, and seeming to demand from the waters her lost husband. She would stand there in the cold

moonlight, till suddenly tears or prayer would relieve the vexed spirit, and slowly and shiveringly the poor creature would win home. She could still pray, and that was comfort ; but she prayed for him ; the earthly love clung to her and the earthly hope. Yet never was wifely affection more ardent, or more pure ; never sufferer more gentle than that fond woman.

It was now winter ; and her sorrows were evidently drawing near their close, when one evening returning from her accustomed wandering, she saw a man by the vicarage door. It was a thick December twilight, and in the wretched and tattered object before her, sick, and bent, and squalid, like one who comes from a devouring shipwreck or a long captivity, who but Mary could have recognised Thomas Clere ? Her heart knew him on the instant, and, with a piercing cry of joy and thankfulness, she rushed into his arms. The cry alarmed the whole family. They hastened to share the joy and the surprise, and to relieve poor Thomas of his fainting burden. Both had sunk together on the snowy ground ; and when loosened from his long embrace, the happy wife was dead !—the shock of joy had been fatal !

M A R I A N N E.

I HAVE had a very great pleasure to-day, although to make my readers fully comprehend how great a one, I must go back more years than I care to think of. When a very young girl, I passed an autumn amongst my father's relatives in a northern county. The greater part of the time was spent with his favourite cousin, the lady of a rich baronet, who was on the point of setting out on an annual visiting tour, as the manner is in those hospitable regions, where the bad roads, the wide distances, and the large mansions, render an occasional sojourn

so much preferable to the brief and formal interchange of mere dinner-parties. Sir Charles and Lady C. were highly pleased at the opportunity which this peregrination of friendship and civility afforded, to show me a fine country, and to introduce me to a wide circle of family connexions.

Our tour was extensive and various. My cousins were acquainted, as it seemed to me, with every one of consequence in the county, and were themselves two of the most popular persons it contained,—he from character, for never was any man more unaffectedly good and kind,—she from manner, being one of the pleasantest women that ever lived,—the most lively and good-humoured, and entertaining, and well-bred. In course, as the young relative and companion of this amiable couple, I saw the country and its inhabitants to great advantage. I was delighted with every thing, and never more enchanted than when, after journeying from house to house for upwards of a month, we arrived at the ancient and splendid baronial castle of the Earl of G.

Now I had caught from Sir Walter Scott's admirable poems, then in their height of fashion, as well as from the older collections of Percy and Ritson, with which I had been familiar almost from the cradle, a perfect enthusiasm for all that savoured of feudal times, and one of the chief pleasures which I had promised myself in my northern excursion, was the probability of encountering some relics of those picturesque but unquiet days. Hitherto these expectations had been disappointed. Halls, places, houses, granges, lodges, parks, and courts out of number, we had visited ; but neither in the north nor in the south had I yet been so happy as to be the inhabitant of a castle. This too was a genuine Gothic castle, towered and turreted, and battlemented, and frowning, as heart could desire ; a real old castle, that had still a moat, and had once exhibited a draw-bridge ; a castle that had certainly existed in the "old border day," and in all probability undergone as many sieges as Branksome itself, inasmuch as it had,

during its whole existence, the fortune to belong to one of the noblest and most warlike names of the "Western Wardenry." Moreover, it was kept up in great style, had spears, bows, and stags' horns in the hall, painted windows in the chapel, a whole suit of armour in the picture gallery, and a purple velvet state bed, gold-fringed, coroneted, and plumed, covered with a purple quilt to match, looking just like a pall, and made up with bolsters at each end,—a symmetry which proved so perplexing to the mayor of the next town, who with his lady happened to sleep there on some electioneering occasion, that the worthy chief magistrate and his wife fairly got in at different ends, and lay the whole night head to foot.* I was not in the coroneted bed, to be sure; I do not think I should much have relished lying under that pall-like counterpane and those waving feathers; but I was in a castle grand and romantic enough even to satisfy the romance of a damsel under seventeen, and I was enchanted; the more especially as the number of the family party promised an union of the modern gaiety, which I was far from disliking, with the ancient splendour for which I sighed. But, before I had been four and twenty hours within those massive walls, I began to experience "the vanity of human wishes," to wonder what was become of my raptures, to yawn I did not know why, to repeat to myself over and over again the two lines of Scott that seemed most *à-propos* to my situation,

"And all in high baronial pride
A life both dull and dignified;"—

in short, to find out that stupid people will be stupid any where, even in a castle. I will give after my fashion a slight outline, a sort of pen-and-ink drawing of the party round the dining-table; and by the time they have scanned it, my readers,

* This accident actually befell the then mayor of N. at Alnwick castle some years back.

if they do not yawn too, will at least cease to wonder at my solecism in good-breeding.

We will begin at the earl, a veteran nearly seventy years of age, a tall, lank figure with an erect military carriage, a sharp weather-beaten face, and a few grey hairs most exactly powdered and bound together in a slender *queue* behind. His talk was very like his person, long and thin; prosing most unmercifully about the American war, and telling interminable zig-zag stories which set comprehension at defiance. For the rest, he was an excellent person, kind to his family and civil to his guests; he never failed to take wine with Lady C. at dinner, and regularly every morning made me in the very same words a flourishing compliment on my rosy cheeks.

Next in order came the countess, tall and lean like her husband, and (allowing for difference of sex and complexion, his skin resembling brick-dust in colour, and hers being of the sort of paleness usually called *sallow*) not unlike him in countenance. In their minds and manners there was also a similarity, yet not without some difference.—Dulness in him showed itself in dead speech, in her in dead silence. Stiff and cold as a poker was my lady. Her fixed, settled, unsmiling silence hung over the banquet like a cloud, chilling and darkening all about her. Yet they say she was warm-hearted, and (which would seem extraordinary if we did not frequently meet with instances of the same apparent contradiction) was famous for epistolary composition, dealt out words in writing with astonishing fluency and liberality, and was celebrated far and near for that most intolerable waste of paper which is commonly known by the name of a sensible letter.

Then came the goodly offspring of this noble couple, that is to say, the three youngest; for the elder branches of this illustrious house were married and settled in distant homes. The honourable Frederic G., the only son who remained in the paternal mansion, was a diplomatist *in embryo*, a rising young man. His company they were not likely to enjoy long, since

he was understood to be in training for the secretaryship to a foreign embassy. He had recently come into parliament for a neighbouring borough, and his maiden speech (I wonder who wrote it!) had created a prodigious sensation in the family circle. On the glory of that oration, the echo of his fame, he lived then, and has lived (as far as I know) ever since. I can only say that I never heard him utter more than a monosyllable at a time during the ten days that we breakfasted, dined, and supped in company—ineffable coxcomb! and I have not heard of his speaking in the House of Commons from that time to this. There he sits single-speech G. Of his elder sister, the Lady Matilda, I can say little more than that she was reckoned one of the finest harp-players in England—a musical automaton, who put forth notes instead of words, and passed her days in alternate practisings for the purpose of subsequent exhibition, (which fatiguing exercise was of course a continual and provoking struggle with a host of stringed difficulties,) and in the exhibitions themselves, in which also to my ear the difficulties seemed to have the best of the battle. Then followed her sister, the Lady Caroline, an intelligent-looking young woman, and no musician—but, alack! the fair damsel was in love, and on the very point of marriage. Her lover, Lord B., (who may as well fall into this division, since he was domesticated in the house and already considered as a son,) was also pleasant-looking,—but then he was in love too. Of course this couple, although doubtless very good company for each other, went for nothing with the rest of the party, of whose presence indeed they, to do them justice, seemed generally most comfortably unconscious.

Next came the appendages to a great house, the usual official residents. First appeared Mr. M. the family chaplain, a great mathematician, whose very eyes seemed turned inward, as if contemplating the figures on his brain. Never was man so absent since the one described by La Bruyère. He once came down to dinner with the wrong side of his waist-

coat outward ; and, though he complained of the difficulty of buttoning it, could not discover the reason ; and he has been known more than once to walk about all the morning, and even to mount the pulpit, with one white leg and one black, (like the discrepant eyes of my friend the Talking Gentleman,) in consequence of having forgotten to draw a silk stocking over his gauze one. He seldom knew the day of the month, often read a wrong lesson, and was pretty sure to forget his sermon ; otherwise a most kind and excellent creature, whom for very pity nobody could think of disturbing when he appeared immersed in calculation, which was always. Secondly came Miss R., some time governess, and present companion ; what a misnomer ! the errantest piece of still life I ever encountered, pale, freckled, red-haired, and all over small. Thirdly entered Dr. S., the family physician, a stern oracular man, with a big wig and a tremendous frown. Two red-faced gentlemen, *des vieux militaires*, who drank my lord's wine and listened to his stories, completed this amusing assembly.

There was another person who never appeared at the dining-table, but whose presence, during the two or three hours that she spent in the saloon in the morning, and about the same time which she passed in the drawing-room after dinner, distressed and annoyed me more than all the party put together. This was the honourable Mrs. G., the earl's mother, (the title had descended to him from an uncle,) a lady in her ninety-second year, and sufficiently vigorous to justify the expectation that she might live to see a hundred. She was a tall, spare, tough-looking woman, with a long bony face, dim staring eyes, and an aspect altogether corpse-like and unearthly. Her dress was invariably of black silk, with a very long waist, a point-lace kerchief, or rather tippet, and a very small short rounded apron of the same costly material. On her head she wore a lace cap and lappets surmounted with a sort of shepherdess hat of black silk, fastened on with two enormous pins with silver tops. This dress, which, in gay

colours and on a young and handsome woman, would have been very pretty, only served to make Mrs. G. appear more ghastly, more like a faded picture which had stepped out of its frame. She was a perpetual *memento mori*; a skull and cross-bones would hardly have been more efficacious in mortifying the vanity of youth. This, however, I could have endured; it was an evil in common; but the good lady had experienced the partial loss of faculty and memory, so frequent at her advanced age, and having unfortunately mistaken me for her great-grandchild, the eldest daughter of Lord G.'s eldest son, she could by no means be turned aside from the notion which had so unaccountably seized her imagination, and treated me exactly as a doting, scolding great-grandmamma would be likely to treat her unlucky descendant,—a process which so thoroughly disconcerted me, a shy shame-faced girl, that, after I had undergone about six hours of hugging and lecturing from my pretended ancestress, I was fain to keep my room to avoid her intolerable persecution. In this dilemma the countess suddenly proposed to turn me over to Marianne, and a young lady about my own age, whom I had not before seen, made her appearance. Oh what a difference between her and the other inhabitants of the castle! What a lovely airy creature it was!

“A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt and startle and waylay;”

light and bounding as a fawn, with a wild fanciful beauty in her bright black eyes, in the play of her features, and the brilliancy of her dark yet glowing complexion! A charming creature, in mind and in person, was Miss Marianne, for by that name alone she was introduced to me,—almost equally charming in the high spirits whose elasticity harmonized with her animated beauty, or in the tender and pensive melancholy which so often chequered her gayer mood.

We became almost immediately intimate—happy privilege

of youthful companionship !—and had speedily told each other our whole histories, as two young ladies meeting in an old castle ought to do. My story, I am sorry to say, was very little worthy of such a situation and opportunity for display. Nothing could be less romantic than the ease and comfort and indulgence in which my life had hitherto passed, nothing less adapted to a heroine than the secure and affluent middle station in which my happy lot then seemed to be fixed. My tale was told in two or three brief sentences. The history of my fair companion was not so quickly despatched. What she knew of herself might indeed have been revealed in three words, since that amounted to nothing more than her having lived ever since she could recollect at G. Castle, sometimes in the nursery and the library, sometimes in the housekeeper's room, kindly treated by all, and taught by fits and snatches as she came in their way ; so that her education, partly conducted by the young ladies' governess, partly by the young gentlemen's tutor, and sometimes even by Lady G.'s maid, bore a very strong resemblance to that ingenious exercise of female patience called patch-work, where you meet with bits of every thing and nothing complete. The two most extraordinary circumstances were, her want of a surname, (for she had never been called by any other appellation than Marianne,) and the sedulous care with which, although living in the same house, she had been concealed from my *soi-disante* great-grandmother, Mrs. G. The loss of faculty which occasioned that mistake was of recent occurrence, as the venerable lady had, till within a few months, been remarkable for the accuracy and clearness of her perceptions ; and Marianne related fifty stories to prove the care with which her very existence was guarded from Mrs. G.'s knowledge, the manner in which she had been crammed into closets, stowed under sofas, smuggled behind screens, or folded into window-curtains, at the first tap of the old lady's Italian heel,—and the menaces which were thrown out against the servants, if they should presume to

name her in Mrs. G.'s presence. One unlucky footman had actually been discharged on the spot, for want of invention, and presence of mind, and fluency of lying : when questioned as to the arranger of the flowers in their vases, (an art in which she excelled,) he stammered, and looked as if going to say Miss Marianne ; for which piece of intended truth (an uncommon fault in a London footman !) the poor lacquey was dismissed.

Now if either of us had possessed the slightest knowledge of the world, these circumstances would hardly have failed to suggest Marianne's true origin. We should immediately have conjectured her to be the illegitimate offspring of some near connexion of the family ;—in fact, she was the daughter of Lord G.'s second and favourite son, long since deceased, by a beautiful Italian singer, who died in childbed of poor Marianne ; but this was the last conjecture that would have entered either of our silly heads.—I, indeed, not yet seventeen, and carefully brought up, had hardly heard that such things were, and Marianne, although older, and less guarded from the knowledge of fashionable wickedness, had, when left to choose her own studies, read too many novels, in which the heroines emerged from similar obscurity to high rank and brilliant fortune, not to have constructed a romance on that model for her own benefit. Indeed she had two, in one of which she turned out to be a foreign princess, in the other the daughter of an English duke.

I remember being a little startled, when, after I had given all my faith to the Russian legend (for the emperor Paul was the potentate on whom she had pitched for her papa—pretty choice !) she began to knock down her own castle in the air, for the sake of rebuilding it on an English foundation. I could readily imagine that she had one father, but could not quite comprehend what she should want with two : besides, having given up my mind to the northern romance, I did not like to be disturbed by a see-saw of conjectures, good for nothing

but to put one out. I was of a constant disposition, and stuck to the princess Rusty-Fusty version of the story so pertinaciously that I do not even know what duke she had adopted for her English father. Any one might have been proud of her ; for, with all this nonsense, the offspring of an equivocal situation and a neglected education, she was a sweet and charming creature, kind, and generous, and grateful, with considerable quickness of talent, and a power of attaching those with whom she conversed, such as I have rarely seen equalled. I loved her dearly, and, except the formal meals which we shared with the rest of the family, spent nearly the whole of my visit with her alone, strolling through the park or the castle in the mornings, and in the evenings sitting over the fire deep in girlish talk, or turning over the books in the old library with a less girlish curiosity. Oh, how sorry we were to part ! I saw nobody in the whole north like Marianne.

In a few months, however, I returned into the south, and in a very few more the kind cousins, with whom I had visited G. Castle, were removed from me by death. My other relatives in that county fell gradually off: some died; some went to reside abroad; and some were lost to me by the unintended estrangement which grows out of a long suspension of intercourse; so that my pleasant northern tour, unconnected with any previous or subsequent habits or associations, seemed an insulated point in my history, a brilliant dream called up to recollection at pleasure like some vivid poem, or some rare and gorgeous tapestry, rather than a series of real events burnt into the mind and the memory by the strange and intense power of personal feelings. Eighteen years had elapsed since I had seen or heard of Marianne. I knew, indeed, that the good earl and countess had died shortly after my visit, and that their aged mother must, in the course of nature, have passed away long ago. But of her own destiny I had heard nothing; and, being absorbed in new occupations and nearer friends, I had, I fear, ceased even to guess. The curiosity

and wonder excited by her situation had long ceased, (for wonder and curiosity are very young feelings,) and the interest produced by her character was dormant, though not extinct. In short, the black-eyed beauty of G. Castle was fairly forgotten, till my good stars led me this morning to B. to witness, for the first and last time of my life, the ascent of a balloon.

Is there any one of my readers who has not seen this spectacle? If such there be, it may perhaps be necessary to say how much duller than most sights (and almost all sights unconnected with art are dull) that dangerous toy is; how much the letting off a boy's kite excels it in glee, and vies with it in utility; the science of balloons being, as far as I know, nearly the only discovery of this chemical and mechanical age (when between steam-engines and diving bells, man contrives to have pretty much his own way with the elements) which has continued to stand altogether still, as cumbersome, as unmanageable, and almost as ugly as the original machine of Montgolfier. Nevertheless the age is also a staring age, and we poor country people, who know no better, are easily taken in, so that the announcement of the aeronautic expedition (for so it was called in the programme) drew at least ten thousand gazers into the good town of B., and amongst the rest my simple self.

The day was showery by fits, and we thought ourselves very fortunate in being able to secure a commodious window in a large room just overlooking the space where the balloon was filling. At first we looked at that flagging, flapping bag of tri-coloured silk, made dingy by varnish, and dingier still by the pack-thread net-work which enclosed it, giving it, when nearly filled, something of the air of a Canteloupe melon. A thousand yards of silk, they said, were wasted in that unsightly thing, enough (as a calculating milliner of my acquaintance, indignant at such misapplication of finery, angrily observed) to have made a hundred dresses with trimmings and

tippetts. We looked at the slow filling ball till in our weariness we thought it became emptier, and then we looked at a prettier sight,—the spectators. They consisted for the most part of country people, spread all the way down the large space to the meadows, perched on the church-tower, on the side of the F. hill, on trees, on waggons, on the church-yard wall. Nothing was visible but heads and upturned faces, and here and there a little opening made by habitual deference for horsemen and carriages, in that grand and beautiful living mass, a pleased and quiet crowd. Then we looked at the peaceful landscape beyond, the Thames winding in its green meadows under the fine range of the O**shire hills, shut in on one side by the church with its magnificent Gothic tower, on the other by the before-mentioned eminence crowned with trees as with a plume. Then a sudden shower put motion in the crowd; flight and scrambling and falling ensued; numerous umbrellas were expanded; and the whole scene resembled those processions which one has sometimes seen on Indian paper, and became quite oriental.

At last, however, we were tired of gazing without, and turned our attention within doors. The room was full of fluctuating company, all strange to us except the lady of the house; and the party nearest to us, our next-window neighbours, naturally engaged us most. The party in question consisted of a gentleman and lady in the very morning of life, who, placed in an old-fashioned window-seat, were sedulously employed in guarding and caressing a beautiful little girl about three years old, who stood between them infinitely amused at the scene. They were, as our hostess informed us, a young couple of large fortune newly settled in the neighbourhood, and seemed of that happy order of beings, handsome, smiling, and elegant, to whom every occupation is graceful. Certainly nothing could be prettier or more becoming than the way in which they talked to their lovely little girl. Another lady, evidently belonging to the party, stood near them, occasionally bending

to the frequent questions of the child, or making a polite reply to the animated observations of her father, but constantly declining his offered seat, and apparently taking as little interest in the scene as well might be.

This indifference to an object which was exciting the rapturous attention of some thousands of spectators kept me so comfortably in countenance, that it excited a strong desire to discover as much as I could without rudeness of a person whose opinions, on one point, seeming to accord so remarkably with my own, gave assurance, as I modestly thought, of a sensible woman.

The lady was tall and slender, and dressed with that remarkable closeness and quietness, that entire absence of fashion or pretension, which belong almost exclusively to governesses or the serious. A snow-white dress entirely untrimmed, a plain but nicely-fitting dove-coloured spencer, a straw cottage bonnet, and a white veil a good deal over the face, might have suited either caste ; but there was something in that face which inclined for the governess, or rather against the devotee. It was a pale thin countenance, which had evidently seen thirty summers, with features which had lost their bloom and roundness, but still retained their delicate symmetry, lighted up by a pair of black eyes inexpressibly intelligent—saucy, merry, dancing, talking ! Oh those eyes ! Whenever a gentleman said something learnedly wrong about hydrogen or oxygen, or air-valves or gasometers, or such branches of learning, or a lady vented something sentimentally silly about sailing amongst the stars, those black eyes flashed into laughter. Of a certainty they did not belong to one of the serious, or they would have been kept in better order ; I had therefore quite decided in favour of the governess, and had begun to puzzle myself to remember in whose head, beside that of the younger Mina, (that most interesting of all the Spanish patriots, who was in London during the hundred days, and was afterwards most barbarously shot in Mexico,) I had seen such

a pair of dancing lights, when the whole truth flashed upon me at a word. "Marianne"—began the pretty mamma of the pretty child, and in a moment I too had exclaimed, "Marianne!" had darted forward, and seized both her hands, and in less than a minute we were seated in the remotest corner of the room, away from the bustle and the sight, the gazers and the balloon. It was turned off, I believe,—at least I have a faint recollection of certain shouts which implied its ascent, and remember being bored by a sentimental young lady to come and look at it, "sailing like an eagle along the sky." But neither Marianne nor I saw or thought of the spectacle. We were in the midst of old recollections and old pleasures, now raining questions on each other, now recurring delightedly to our brief companionship, and smiling half ashamed and half regretfully on the sweet illusion of that happy time.

Alas for my beautiful princess of G. Castle! Here she was, no longer young, fair, or blooming, a poor nursery governess! Alas for my princess! Sixteen years of governessing, sixteen years passed in looking at the world through the back windows, might well have dimmed that brilliant beauty, and tamed that romantic imagination. But I had not conversed with her five minutes before I found that her spirit had lost none of its buoyancy, that under all her professional demureness she was still, as her black eyes promised, one of the airiest and sprightliest creatures in the world. She glanced rapidly, but with great feeling, over the kindness she had experienced from the whole family on the death of Lord and Lady G., and then, in a style of light and playful gaiety, indescribably graceful and attractive, proceeded to give me the history of her successive governess-ships, touching with a pencil inimitably sportive the several humours and affectations which she had encountered in her progress through the female world. "I was never," said she in conclusion, "so happily situated as I am at present. The father and mother are charming people, and my little Emma" (by this time the child had joined us,

and was nestling in Marianne's lap) "is the most promising pupil I ever had in my life. In little more than four months she has learned three letters and three quarters. I should like to see her through the alphabet—but yet"—and here she broke off with a smile and a blush, and a momentary depression of her sparkling eyes, that again brought before me the youthful beauty of G. Castle, and irresistibly suggested the idea of a more suitable termination to the romance than it had originally promised. Such blushes have only one meaning. Finding that she still paused, I ventured to finish the sentence. "But yet you will leave this promising pupil?"—"Yes."—"Not, however, for a similar situation?"—"No."—"And who is the happy man?"—"A very old friend. Do you remember Mr. M., the chaplain at the castle?"—"What! the great mathematician with the scratch wig, who saw without seeing, and heard without hearing, who wore his waistcoat the wrong way, and went to chapel with one white stocking and one black? Is he *le futur*?" Marianne laughed outright. "His son! his son! He must have been at Cambridge when you were with us, for he also is a great mathematician, although I promise you he wears his waistcoat with the right side outward, and his legs are both of one colour. We have been waiting for a college living; and now"—and again she broke off and blushed and smiled; and again that smiling blush of modesty and pleasure and love brought back for a moment the fleeting beauty of seventeen; and even in that moment the show was over, the crowd dispersed, and we parted.*

* Not however for another period of eighteen years. Before the summer was gone, I had the pleasure of visiting her at her pretty rectory, of seeing with my own eyes that a great mathematician may wear stockings to match, and of witnessing the quiet gaiety, the heartfelt happiness, of the dear and charming Marianne.

A VISIT TO LUCY.

LUCY, who in her single state bore so striking a resemblance to Jenny Dennison, in the number and variety of her lovers, continues to imitate that illustrious original in her married life, by her dexterous and excellent management, of which I have been lately an amused and admiring witness. Not having seen her for a long time, tempted by the fineness of the day, the first day of summer, and by the pleasure of carrying to her a little house-wifely present from her sometime mistress, we resolved to take a substantial luncheon at two o'clock, and drive over to drink tea with her at five, such being, as we well knew, the fashionable visiting hour at S.

The day was one glow of sunshine, and the road wound through a beautiful mixture of hill, and dale, and rich woodland, clothed in the brightest foliage, and thickly studded with gentlemen's seats, and prettier cottages, their gardens gay with the blossoms of the plum and the cherry, tossing their snowy garlands across the deep blue sky. So we journeyed on through pleasant villages and shady lanes till we emerged into the opener and totally different scenery of M. Common; a wild district, always picturesque and romantic, but now peculiarly brilliant, and glowing with the luxuriant orange flowers of the furze in its height of bloom, stretching around us like a sea of gold, and loading the very air with its rich almond odour. Who would have believed that this brown, barren, shaggy heath could have assumed such splendour, such majesty? The farther we proceeded, the more beautiful it appeared, the more gorgeous, the more brilliant. Whether climbing up the steep bank, and mixing with the thick plantation of dark firs; or chequered with brown heath and green turf on the open plain, where the sheep and lambs were straying; or circling round

the pool covered with its bright white flowers ; or edging the dark morass inlaid with the silky tufts of the cotton grass ; or creeping down the deep dell where the alders grow ; or mixing by the roadside with the shining and varied bark, now white, now purplish, and the light tremulous leaves of the feathery birch-tree ;—in every form or variety this furze was beauty itself. We almost lamented to leave it, as we wound down the steep hill of M. West-end, that most picturesque village, with its long open sheds for broom and faggot-making ; its little country inn, the Red Lion ; its pretty school just in the bottom, where the clear stream comes bubbling over the road, and the romantic foot-bridge is flung across ; and with cottages straggling up the hill on the opposite ascent, orchards backed by meadows, and the light wreaths of smoke sailing along the green hill-side, the road winding amidst all, beside another streamlet, whose deep rust-coloured scum gives token of a chalybeate spring.

Even this sweet and favourite scene, which, when I would think of the perfection of village landscape, of a spot to live and die in, rises unbidden before my eyes,—this dear and cherished picture, which I generally leave so reluctantly—was hurried over now, so glad were we to emerge once more from its colder colouring into the full glory of the waving furze on S. common, brighter even than that of M., which we left behind us. Even Lucy's house was unheeded till we drove up to the door, and found, to our great satisfaction, that she was at home.

The three years that have elapsed since her marriage have changed the style of her beauty. She is grown very fat, and rather coarse ; and having moreover taken to loud speaking, (as I apprehend a village schoolmistress must do in pure self-defence, that her voice may be heard in the *melée*,) our airy sparkling soubrette, although still handsome, has been transmuted somewhat suddenly into a bustling merry country dame, looking her full age, if not a little older. It is such a transi-

tion as a rosebud experiences when turned into a rose, such as might befall the pretty coquette, mistress Anne Page, when she wedded master Fenton, and became one of the merry wives of Windsor. Lucy, however, in her dark gown and plain cap, (for her dress hath undergone as much alteration as her person,) her smiles and her rosiness, is still as fair a specimen of country comeliness as heart can desire.

We found her very busy, superintending the operations of a certain she-tailor, a lame woman famous for button-holes, who travels from house to house in that primitive district, making and repairing men's gear, and who was at that moment endeavouring to extract a smart waistcoat for our friend the schoolmaster out of a remnant of calico and a blemished waistcoat-piece, which had been purchased at half-price for his behoof by his frugal help-mate. The more material parts of the cutting-out had been effected before my arrival, considerably at the expense of the worthy pedagogue's comfort, although to the probable improvement of his shape; for certainly the new fabric promised to be at least an inch smaller than the pattern;—that point, however, had been by dint of great ingenuity satisfactorily adjusted, and I found the lady of the shears and the lady of the rod in the midst of a dispute on the question of buttons, which the tailoress insisted must be composed of metal or mother of pearl, or any thing but covered molds, inasmuch as there would be no stuff left to cover them; whilst Lucy on her side insisted that there was plenty, that any thing (as all the world knew) would suffice to cover buttons if people were clever and careful, and that certain most diminutive and irregular scraps, which she gathered from the table and under it, and displayed with great ostentation, were amply sufficient for the purpose. "If the pieces are not big enough," continued she, "you have nothing to do but to join them." And as Lucy had greatly the advantage both in loudness of voice and fluency of thought and word, over the itinerant sempstress,

who was a woman of slow quiet speech, she carried her point in the argument most triumphantly, although whether the unlucky waistcoat-maker will succeed in stretching her materials so as to do the impossible, remains to be proved, the button question being still undecided when I left S.

Her adversary being fairly silenced, Lucy laid aside her careful thoughts and busy looks ; and leaving the poor woman to her sewing and stitching, and a little tidy lass (a sort of half-boarder, who acts half as servant, half as pupil) to get all things ready for tea, she prepared to accompany me to a pleasant coppice in the neighbourhood, famous for wild lilies of the valley, to the love of which delicate flower she, not perhaps quite unjustly, partly attributed my visit.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the wood where they are found, which we reached by crossing first the open common, with its golden waves of furze, and then a clover field intensely green, deliciously fresh and cool to the eye and the tread. The copse was just in its pleasantest state, having luckily been cut last year, and being too thinly clothed with timber to obstruct the view. It goes sloping down a hill, till it is lost in the green depths of P. Forest, with an abruptness of descent which resembles a series of terraces, or rather ledges, so narrow that it is sometimes difficult to find a space on which to walk. The footing is the more precarious, as even the broader paths are intersected and broken by hollows and caves, where the ground has given way and been undermined by fox earths. On the steepest and highest of these banks, in a very dry unsheltered situation, the lily of the valley grows so profusely, that the plants almost covered the ground with their beautiful broad leaves, and the snowy white bells, which envelope the most delicate of odours. All around grow the fragile wind-flowers, pink as well as white ; the coral blossoms of the whortle-berry ; the graceful wood-sorrel ; the pendent drops of the stately Solomon's seal, which hang like waxen tassels under the full and regular leaves ; the

bright wood-vetch ; the unobtrusive woodroof, whose scent is like new hay, and which retains and communicates it when dried ; and lastly, those strange freaks of nature the orchises, where the portrait of an insect is so quaintly depicted in a flower. The bee orchis abounds also in the Maple-Durham woods—those woods where whilom flourished the two stately but unlovely flowers Martha and Teresa Blount, of *Popish* fame, and which are still in the possession of their family. But, although it is found at Maple-Durham as well as in these copses of North-Hampshire, yet, in the little slip of Berks which divides Hants from Oxfordshire, I have never been able to discover it. The locality of flowers is a curious puzzle. The field tulip, for instance, through whose superb pendent blossoms chequered with puce and lilac the sun shines as gloriously as through stained glass, and which, blended with a still more elegant white variety, covers whole acres of the Kennet meadows, can by no process be coaxed into another habitation, however apparently similar in situation and soil. Treat them as you may, they pine and die and disappear. The Duke of Marlborough only succeeded in naturalizing them at White-Knights by the magnificent operation of transplanting half an acre of meadow, grass and earth and all, to the depth of two feet ! and even there they seemed dwindling. The wood-sorrel, which I was ambitious of fixing in the shrubberies of our old place, served me the provoking trick of living a year or two, and bearing leaves, but never flowers ; and that far rarer but less beautiful plant the field-star of Bethlehem,—a sort of large hyacinth of the hue of the misletoe, which, in its pale and shadowy stalk and blossom, has something to me awful, unearthly, ghastly, mystical, druidical,—used me still worse, not only refusing to grow in a corner of our orchard where I planted it, but vanishing from the spot where I procured the roots, although I left at least twenty times as many as I took.

Nothing is so difficult to tame as a wild flower ; and wisely

so, for they generally lose much of their characteristic beauty by any change of soil or situation. That very wood-sorrel now, which I coveted so much, I saw the other day in a green-house ! By what chance my fellow amateur persuaded that swamp-loving, cold-braving, shade-seeking plant to blossom in the very region of light, and heat, and dryness, I cannot imagine : but there it was in full bloom, as ugly a little abortion as ever showed its poor face, smaller far than in its native woods, the flowers unveined and colourless, and bolt upright, the leaves full spread and stiff,—no umbrella fold ! no pendent grace ! no changing hue ! none but a lover's eye would have recognised the poor beauty of the woods in the faded prisoner of the green-house. No caged bird ever underwent such a change. I will never try to domesticate that pretty blossom again—content to visit it in its own lovely haunts, the bed of moss or the beech-root sofa.

The lily of the valley we may perhaps try to transplant. The garden is its proper home ; it seems thrown here by accident ; we cannot help thinking it an abasement, a condescension. The lily must be transportable. For the present, however, we were content to carry away a basket of blossoms, reserving till the autumn our design of peopling a shady bower in our own small territories, the identical border where in summer our geraniums flourish, with that simplest and sweetest of flowers.

We then trudged back to Lucy's to tea, talking by the way of old stories, old neighbours, and old friends—mixed on her part with a few notices of her new acquaintance, lively, shrewd, and good-humoured as usual. She is indeed a most agreeable and delightful person ; I think the lately developed quality at which I hinted in my opening remarks, the slight tinge of Jenny-Dennison-ism, only renders her conversation more piquant and individualized, and throws her merits into sharper relief. We talked of old stories and new, and soon found she had lost none of her good gifts in gossipry ; of her thousand and one lovers, about whom, although she has quite left off

coquetry, she inquired with a kindly interest ; of our domestic affairs, and above all of her own. She has no children—a circumstance which I sometimes think she regrets ; I do not know why, except that my dear mother having given her on her marriage, amongst a variety of parting gifts, a considerable quantity of baby things, she probably thinks it a pity that they should not be used. And yet the expensiveness of children might console her on the one hand, and the superabundance of them with which she is blest in school-time on the other. Indeed, she has now the care of a charity Sunday-school, in addition to her work-day labours—a circumstance which has by no means altered her opinion of the inefficacy and inexpediency of general education.

I suspect that the irregularity of payment is one cause of her dislike to the business ; and yet she is so ingenious a contriver in the matter of extracting money's worth from those who have no money, that we can hardly think her unreasonable in requiring the *hen-tailor* to cover buttons out of nothing. Where she can get no cash, she takes the debt in kind ; and, as most of her employers are in that predicament, she lives in this respect like the Loochooans, who never heard of a currency. She accommodates herself to this state of things with admirable facility. She has sold her cow, because she found she could be served with milk and butter by the wife of a small farmer who has four children at her school ; and has parted with her poultry and pigs, and left off making bread, because the people of both shops are customers to her husband in his capacity of shoemaker, and she gets bread, and eggs, and bacon, for nothing. On the same principle, she has commenced brewing, because the maltster's son and daughter attend her seminary, and she procured three new barrels, coolers, tubs, &c., from a cooper who was in debt to her husband for shoes. "Shoes," or "children," is indeed the constant answer to the civil notice which one is accustomed to take of any novelty in the house. "Shoes" produced the commodious dressing-table

and washing stand, coloured like rose-wood, which adorn her bed-chamber ; “ children ” were the source of the good-as-new roller and wheelbarrow which stand in the court ; and to “ shoes and children ” united are they indebted for the excellent double hedge-row of grubbed wood which she took me to see in returning from the copse—“ a brand (as she observed) snatched out of the fire ; for the poor man who owed them the money must break, and had nothing useful to give them except this wood, which was useless to him, as he had not money to get it grubbed up.—If he holds on till the autumn,” continued Lucy, “ we shall have a good crop of potatoes from the hedge-row. We have planted them on the chance.” The ornamental part of her territory comes from the same fertile source. Even the thrift which adorns the garden (fit emblem of its mistress !) was a present from the drunken gardener of a gentleman in the neighbourhood. “ He does not pay his little girl’s schooling very regularly,” quoth she, “ but then he is so civil, poor man ! any thing in the garden is at our service.”

“ Shoes and children ” are the burden of the song. The united professions re-act on each other in a remarkable manner ;—shoes bring scholars and scholars consume shoes. The very charity school before mentioned, a profitable concern, of which the payment depends on rich people and not on poor, springs indirectly from a certain pair of purple kid boots, a capital fit (I must do our friend, the pedagogue, the justice to say that he understands the use of his awl, no man better !) which so pleased the vicar’s lady, who is remarkable for a neat ankle, that she not only gave a magnificent order for herself, and caused him to measure her children, but actually prevailed on her husband to give the appointment of Sunday school-master to this matchless cordwainer. I should not wonder if, through her powerful patronage, he should one day rise to be parish-clerk.

Well, the tea and the bread and butter were discussed with

the appetite produced by a two hours' ride and a three hours' walk—to say nothing of the relish communicated to our viands by the hearty hospitality of our hostess, who “gaily pressed and smiled.” And then the present, our ostensible errand, a patch-work quilt, long the object of Lucy's admiration, was given with due courtesy, and received with abundance of pleased and blushing thanks.

At last the evening began to draw in, her husband, who had been absent, returned, and we were compelled to set out homewards, and rode back with our basket of lilies through a beautiful twilight world, inhaling the fragrance of the blossomed furze, listening to the nightingales, and talking of Lucy's good management.

DOCTOR TUBB.

EVERY country village has its doctor. I allude to that particular department of the medical world, which is neither physician, nor surgeon, nor apothecary, although it unites the offices of all three ; which is sometimes an old man, and sometimes an old woman, but generally an oracle, and always (with reverence be it spoken) a quack. Our village, which is remarkably rich in functionaries adorned with the true official qualities, could hardly be without so essential a personage. Accordingly we have a quack of the highest and most extended reputation in the person of Doctor Tubb, inventor and compounder of medicines, bleeder, shaver, and physicker of man and beast.

How this accomplished barber-surgeon came by his fame I do not very well know ; his skill he inherited (as I have been told) in the female line, from his great-aunt Bridget, who was herself the first practitioner of the day, the wise woman of the

village, and bequeathed to this favourite nephew her blessing, Culpepper's Herbal, a famous salve for cuts and chilblains, and a still. This legacy decided his fate. A man who possessed an herbal and could read it without much spelling, who had a still and could use it, had already the great requisites for his calling. He was also blest with a natural endowment which I take to be at least equally essential to the success of quackery of any sort, especially of medical quackery; namely, a prodigious stock of impudence. Molière's hero,—who having had the ill-luck to place the heart on the wrong side, (I mean the right,) and being reminded of his mistake, says coolly, "*nous avons changé tout cela*"—is modesty itself compared with the brazen front of Doctor Tubb. And it tells accordingly. Patients come to him from far and near; he is the celebrated person (*l'homme marquant*) of the place. I myself have heard of him all my life as a distinguished character, although all our personal acquaintance is of a comparatively recent date, and began in a manner sufficiently singular and characteristic.

On taking possession of our present abode, about four years ago, we found our garden, and all the gardens of the straggling village-street in which it is situated, filled, peopled, infested by a beautiful flower, which grew in such profusion, and was so difficult to keep under, that (poor pretty thing!) instead of being admired and cherished and watered and supported, as it well deserves to be, and would be if it were rare, it is disregarded, affronted, maltreated, cut down, pulled up, hoed out, like a weed. I do not know the name of this elegant plant, nor have I met with any one who does; we call it the Spicer, after an old naval officer who once inhabited the white house just above, and, according to tradition, first brought the seed from foreign parts. It is a sort of large veronica, with a profusion of white gauzy flowers streaked with red, like the apple blossom. Strangers admire it prodigiously; and so do I—every where but in my own garden.

I never saw any thing prettier than a whole bed of these spicers, which had clothed the top of a large heap of earth belonging to our little mason by the road-side. Whether the wind had carried the light seed from his garden, or it had been thrown out in the mould, none could tell ; but there grew the plants as thick and close as grass in a meadow, and covered with delicate red and white blossoms like a fairy orchard. I never passed without stopping to look at them ; and, however accustomed to the work of extirpation in my own territories, I was one day half-shocked to see a man, his pockets stuffed with the plants, two huge bundles under each arm, and still tugging away root and branch. "Poor pretty flower," thought I, "not even suffered to enjoy the waste by the road-side ! chased from the very common of nature, where the thistle and the nettle may spread and flourish ! Poor despised flower !" This devastation did not, however, as I soon found, proceed from disrespect ; the spicer-gatherer being engaged in sniffing with visible satisfaction to the leaves and stalks of the plant, which (although the blossom is wholly scentless) emit when bruised a very unpleasant odour. "It has a fine venomous smell," quoth he in soliloquy, "and will certainly when stilled be good for something or other." This was my first sight of Doctor Tubb.

We have frequently met since, and are now well acquainted, although the worthy experimentalist considers me as a rival practitioner, an interloper, and hates me accordingly. He has very little cause. My quackery—for I plead guilty to a little of that aptness to offer counsel in very plain and common cases, which those who live much among poor people, and feel an unaffected interest in their health and comfort, can hardly help—my quackery, being mostly of the cautious, preventive, safe side, common-sense order, stands no chance against the boldness and decision of his all-promising ignorance. He says, Do ! I say, Do not ! He deals in *stimuli*, I in sedatives ; I give medicine, he gives cordial waters.

Alack ! alack ! when could a dose of rhubarb, even although reinforced by a dole of good broth, compete with a draught of peppermint, a licensed dram ? No ! no ! Doctor Tubb has no cause to fear my practice.

The only patient I ever won from the worthy empiric was his own wife, who had languished under his prescriptions for three mortal years, and at last stole down in the dusk of the evening to hold a private consultation with me. I was not very willing to invade the doctor's territories in my own person, and really feared to undertake a case which had proved so obstinate ; I therefore offered her a ticket to the B. dispensary, an excellent charity, which has rescued many a victim from the clutches of our herbalist. But she said that her husband would never forgive such an affront to his skill, he having an especial aversion to the dispensary and its excellent medical staff, whom he was wont to call "book-doctors ;" so that wise measure was perforce abandoned. My next suggestion was more to her taste ; I counselled her to "throw physic to the dogs ;" she did so, and by the end of the week she was another woman. I never saw such a cure. Her husband never made such a one in all the course of his practice. By the simple expedient of throwing away his decoctions, she is become as strong and as hearty as I am. *N. B.* for fear of misconstruction, it is proper to add, that I do not in the least accuse or suspect the worthy doctor of wishing to get rid of his wife—God forbid ! He is a tolerable husband, as times go, and performs no murders but in the way of his profession : indeed, I think he is glad that his wife should be well again ; yet he cannot quite forgive the cause of the cure, and continues boldly to assert, in all companies, that it was a newly discovered fomentation of *yarbs*, applied to her by himself about a month before, which produced this surprising recovery ; and I really believe that he thinks so. One secret of the implicit confidence which he inspires, is that triumphant reliance on his own infallibility with which he is possessed—the secret

perhaps of all creators of enthusiasm, from Mahomet and Cromwell to the

“Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
Believ’d the magic wonders that he sang.”

As if to make some amends to this prescriber-general for the patient of whom I had deprived him, I was once induced to seek his services medically, or rather surgically, for one of my own family,—for no less a person than May, poor pretty May! One November evening, her master being on a coursing visit in Oxfordshire, and May having been left behind as too much fatigued with a recent hard day’s work to stand a long dirty journey, (note, that a greyhound, besides being exceedingly susceptible of bad weather and watery ways, is a worse traveller than any other dog that breathes; a miserable little pug, or a lady’s lap-dog, would, in a progress of fifty miles, tire down the slayer of hares and outrunner of race horses,) —May being, as I said, left behind slightly indisposed, the boy who had the care of her, no less a person than the runaway Henry, came suddenly into the parlour to tell me that she was dying. Now May is not only my pet but the pet of the whole house, so that the news spread universal consternation; there was a sudden rush of the female world to the stable, and a general feeling that Henry was right, when poor May was discovered stretched at full length in a stall, with no other sign of life than a tremendous and visible pulsation of the arteries about her chest—you might almost hear the poor heart beat, so violent was the action. “Bleeding!” —“She must be bled!” burst simultaneously from two of our corps; and immediately her body-servant the boy, who stood compromising his dignity by a very unmanly shower of tears, vanished, and re-appeared in a few seconds, dragging Doctor Tubb by the skirts, who, as it was Saturday night, was exercising his tonsorial functions in the tap-room of the Rose, where he is accustomed to operate hebdominally on half the beards of the parish.

The doctor made his entry apparently with considerable reluctance, enacting for the first and last time in his life the part of *Le Médecin malgré lui*. He held his razor in one hand and a shaving brush in the other, whilst a barber's apron was tied round the shabby, rusty, out-at-elbow, second-hand black coat, renewed once in three years, and the still shabbier black breeches, of which his costume usually consists. In spite of my seeming, as I really was, glad to see him, a compliment which from me had at least the charm of novelty,—in spite of a very gracious reception, I never saw the man of medicine look more completely astray. He has a pale, meagre, cadaverous face at all times, and a long lank body that seems as if he fed upon his own physic (although it is well known that gin, sheer gin, of which he is by no means sparing, is the only distilled water that finds its way down his throat):—but on this night, between fright—for Henry had taken possession of him without even explaining his errand,—and shame to be dragged into my presence whilst bearing the *insignia* of the least dignified of his professions, his very wig, the identical brown scratch, which he wears by way of looking professional, actually stood on end. He was followed by a miscellaneous procession of assistants, very kind, very curious, and very troublesome, from that noisy neighbour of ours, the well-frequented Rose inn. First marched mine host, red waistcoated and jolly as usual, bearing a huge foaming pewter pot of double X, a sovereign cure for all sublunary ills, and lighted by the limping hostler, who tried in vain to keep pace with the swift stride of his master, and held at arm's length before him a smoky horn lantern, which might well be called dark. Next tripped Miss Phoebe, (this misadventure happened before the grand event of her marriage with the patten-maker,) with a flaring candle in one hand and a glass of cherry-brandy, reserved by her mother for grand occasions, in the other—*autre remède!* Then followed the motley crew of the tap-room, among whom figured my friend Joel, with a woman's apron

tied round his neck, and his chin covered with lather, he having been the identical customer—the very shavee, whose beard happened to be under discussion when the unfortunate interruption occurred.

After the bustle and alarm had in some measure subsided, the doctor marched up gravely to poor May, who had taken no sort of notice of the uproar.

“She must be bled!” quoth I.

“She must be fomented and physicked!” quoth the doctor! and he immediately produced from either pocket a huge bundle of dried herbs, (perhaps the identical venomous-smelling spicer,) which he gave to Miss Phoebe to make into a decoction *secundum artem*, and a huge horse-ball, which he proceeded to divide into bolusses;—think of giving a horse-ball to my May!—“She must be bled immediately!” said I.

“She must not!” replied the doctor.

“You shall bleed her!” cried Henry.

“I won’t!” rejoined the doctor. “She shall be fo”—*mented* he would have added; but her faithful attendant, thoroughly enraged, screamed out, “She sha’n’t!” and a regular scolding match ensued, during which both parties entirely lost sight of the poor patient, and mine host of the Rose had very nearly succeeded in administering his specific—the double X, which would doubtless have been as fatal as any prescription of licentiate or quack. The worthy landlord had actually forced open her jaws, and was about to pour in the liquor, when I luckily interposed in time to give the ale a more natural direction down his own throat, which was almost as well accustomed to such potations as that of Boniface. He was not at all offended at my rejection of his kindness, but drank to my health and May’s recovery with equal good-will.

In the mean time the tumult was ended by my friend the cricketer, who, seeing the turn which things were taking, and quite regardless of his own plight, ran down the village to the lea, to fetch another friend of mine, an old gamekeeper, who set

us all to rights in a moment, cleared the stable of the curious impertinents, flung the horse-ball on the dung-hill, and the decoction into the pond, bled poor May, and turned out the doctor ; after which, it is almost needless to say that the patient recovered.

THE BLACK VELVET BAG.

HAVE any of my readers ever found great convenience in the loss, the real loss, of actual tangible property, and been exceedingly provoked and annoyed when such property was restored to them ? If so, they can sympathize with a late unfortunate recovery, which has brought me to great shame and disgrace. There is no way of explaining my calamity but by telling the whole story.

Last Friday fortnight was one of those anomalies in weather with which we English people are visited for our sins ; a day of intolerable wind, and insupportable dust ; an equinoctial gale out of season ; a piece of March unnaturally foisted into the very heart of May ; just as, in the almost parallel mis-arrangement of the English counties, one sees (perhaps out of compliment to this peculiarity of climate, to keep the weather in countenance as it were) a bit of Wiltshire plumped down in the very middle of Berkshire, whilst a great island of the county palatine of Durham figures in the centre of canny Northumberland. Be this as it may, on that remarkably windy day did I set forth to the good town of B., on the feminine errand called shopping. Every lady who lives far in the country, and seldom visits great towns, will understand the full force of that comprehensive word ; and I had not been shopping for a long time : I had a dread of the operation, arising from a consciousness of weakness. I am a true daugh-

ter of Eve, a dear lover of bargains and bright colours ; and knowing this, have generally been wise enough to keep, as much as I can, out of the way of temptation. At last a sort of necessity arose for some slight purchases, in the shape of two new gowns from London, which cried aloud for making. Trimmings, ribands, sewing-silk, and lining, all were called for. The shopping was inevitable, and I undertook the whole concern at once, most heroically resolving to spend just so much and no more ; and half comforting myself that I had a full morning's work of indispensable business, and should have no time for extraneous extravagance.

There was, to be sure, a prodigious accumulation of errands and wants. The evening before, they had been set down in great form, on a slip of paper, headed thus—"things wanted."—To how many and various catalogues that title would apply, from the red bench of the peer, to the oaken settle of the cottager—from him who wants a blue riband, to him who wants bread and cheese ! My list was astounding. It was written in double columns, in an invisible hand ; the long intractable words were brought into the ranks by the Procrustes mode—abbreviation ; and as we approached the bottom, two or three were crammed into one lot, clumped, as the bean-setters say, and designated by a sort of short-hand, a hieroglyphic of my own invention. In good open printing my list would have cut a respectable figure as a catalogue, and filled a decent number of pages—a priced catalogue too ; for, as I had a given sum to carry to market, I amused myself with calculating the proper and probable cost of every article ; in which process I most egregiously cheated the shopkeeper and myself, by copying, with the credulity of hope, from the puffs in newspapers, and expecting to buy fine solid wearable goods at advertising prices. In this way I stretched my money a great deal further than it would go, and swelled my catalogue ; so that at last, in spite of compression and short-hand, I had no room for another word, and was obliged to crowd several

small but important articles, such as cotton, laces, pins, needles, shoe-strings, &c., into that very irregular and disorderly storehouse—that place where most things deposited are lost—*my memory*, by courtesy so called.

The written list was safely consigned, with a well-filled purse, to my usual repository, a black velvet bag; and, the next morning, I and my bag, with its nicely balanced contents of wants and money, were safely conveyed in a little open carriage to the good town of B. There I dismounted, and began to bargain most vigorously, visiting the cheapest shops, cheapening the cheapest articles, yet wisely buying the strongest and the best; a little astonished at first, to find every thing so much dearer than I had set it down, yet soon reconciled to this misfortune by the magical influence which shopping possesses over a woman's fancy—all the sooner reconciled, as the monitory list lay unlooked at, and unthought of, in its grave receptacle, the black velvet bag. On I went, with an air of cheerful business, of happy importance, till my money began to wax small. Certain small aberrations had occurred too in my economy. One article that had happened, by rare accident, to be below my calculation, and, indeed, below any calculation, calico at ninepence, fine, thick, strong, wide calico, at ninepence, (did ever man hear of any thing so cheap?) absolutely enchanted me, and I took the whole piece: then after buying for M. a gown, according to order, I saw one that I liked better, and bought that too. Then I fell in love, was actually captivated by a sky-blue sash and handkerchief,—not the poor, thin, greeny colour which usually passes under that dishonoured name, but the rich full tint of the noon-day sky: and a cap-riband, really pink, that might have vied with the inside leaves of a moss-rose. Then, in hunting after cheapness, I got into obscure shops, where, not finding what I asked for, I was fain to take something that they had, purely to make a proper compensation for the trouble of lugging out drawers, and answering questions.—Lastly, I was fairly coaxed

into some articles by the irresistibility of the sellers,—by the demure and truth-telling look of a pretty quaker, who could almost have persuaded the head off one's shoulders, and who did persuade me that ell-wide muslin would go as far as yard and a half; and by the fluent impudence of a lying shopman, who, under cover of a well-darkened window, affirmed, on his honour, that his brown satin was a perfect match to my green pattern, and forced the said satin down my throat accordingly. With these helps, my money melted all too fast; at half-past five my purse was entirely empty; and, as shopping with an empty purse has by no means the relish and savour of shopping with a full one, I was quite willing and ready to go home to dinner, pleased as a child with my purchases, and wholly unsuspecting the sins of omission, the errands unperformed, which were the natural result of my unconsulted *memoranda* and my treacherous memory.

Home I returned, a happy and proud woman, wise in my own conceit, a thrifty fashion-monger, laden, like a pedlar, with huge packages in stout brown holland, tied up with whipcord, and genteel little parcels, papered and packthreaded in shopmanlike style.—At last we were safely stowed in the pony-chaise, which had much ado to hold us, my little black bag lying, as usual, in my lap; when, as we ascended the steep hill out of B., a sudden puff of wind took at once my cottage-bonnet and my large cloak, blew the bonnet off my head, so that it hung behind me, suspended by the riband, and fairly snapped the string of the cloak, which flew away, much in the style of John Gilpin's, renowned in story. My companion, pitying my plight, exerted himself manfully to regain the fly-away garments, shoved the head into the bonnet, or the bonnet over the head, (I do not know which phrase best describes the *manceuvre*,) with one hand, and recovered the refractory cloak with the other. This last exploit was certainly the most difficult. It is wonderful what a tug he was forced to give, before that obstinate cloak could be brought round: it was

swelled with the wind like a bladder, animated, so to say, like a living thing, and threatened to carry pony and chaise, and riders, and packages, backward down the hill, as if it had been a sail, and we a ship. At last the contumacious garment was mastered. We righted; and, by dint of sitting sideways, and turning my back on my kind comrade, I got home without any further damage than the loss of my bag, which, though not missed before the chaise had been unladen, had undoubtedly gone by the board in the gale; and I lamented my old and trusty companion, without in the least foreseeing the use it would probably be of to my reputation.

Immediately after dinner (for in all cases, even when one has bargains to show, dinner must be discussed) I produced my purchases. They were much admired; and the quantity, when spread out in our little room, being altogether dazzling, and the quality satisfactory, the cheapness was never doubted. Every body thought the bargains were exactly such as I meant to get—for nobody calculated! and the bills being really lost in the lost bag, and the particular prices just as much lost in my memory, (the ninepenny calico was the only article whose cost occurred to me,) I passed, without telling any thing like a fib, merely by a discreet silence, for the best and thriftiest bargainer that ever went shopping. After some time spent very pleasantly, in admiration on one side, and display on the other, we were interrupted by the demand for some of the little articles which I had forgotten. "The sewing-silk, please ma'am, for my mistress's gown." "Sewing-silk! I don't know—look about." Ah, she might look long enough! no sewing-silk was there.—"Very strange!"—Presently came other inquiries—"Where's the tape, Mary?"—"The tape?"—"Yes, my dear; and the needles, pins, cotton, stay-laces, boot-laces;"—"the bobbin, the ferret, shirt-buttons, shoe-strings?"—quoth she of the sewing-silk, taking up the cry: and forthwith began a search as bustling, as active, and as vain, as that of our old spaniel, Brush, after a

hate that had stolen away from her form. At last she suddenly desisted from her rummage—"Without doubt, ma'am, they are in the reticule, and all lost," said she, in a very pathetic tone. "Really," cried I, a little conscience-stricken, "I don't recollect; perhaps I might forget." "Depend on it, my love, that Harriet's right," interrupted one, whose interruptions are always kind; "those are just the little articles that people put in reticules, and you never could forget so many things; besides, you wrote them down." "I don't know—I am not sure." But I was not listened to; Harriet's conjecture had been metamorphosed into a certainty; all my sins of omission were stowed in the reticule; and, before bedtime, the little black bag held forgotten things enough to fill a sack.

Never was reticule so lamented by all but its owner; a boy was immediately despatched to look for it, and, on his returning empty-handed, there was even a talk of having it cried. My care, on the other hand, was all directed to prevent its being found. I had had the good luck to lose it in a suburb of B. renowned for filching, and I remembered that the street was, at the moment, full of people: the bag did actually contain more than enough to tempt those who were naturally disposed to steal for stealing's sake; so I went to bed in the comfortable assurance that it was gone for ever. But there is nothing certain in this world—not even a thief's dishonesty. Two old women, who had pounced at once on my valuable property, quarrelled about the plunder, and one of them, in a fit of resentment at being cheated in her share, went to the mayor of B. and informed against her companion. The mayor, an intelligent and active magistrate, immediately took the disputed bag, and all its contents, into his own possession; and as he is also a man of great politeness, he restored it as soon as possible to the right owner. The very first thing that saluted my eyes, when I awoke in the morning, was a note from Mr. Mayor, with a sealed packet. The fatal truth

was visible ; I had recovered my reticule, and lost my reputation.—There it lay, that identical black bag, with its name-tickets, its cambric handkerchief, its empty purse, its unconsulted list, its thirteen bills and its two letters ; one from a good sort of lady-farmer, inquiring the character of a cook, with half a sonnet written on the blank pages ; the other from a literary friend, containing a critique on the plot of a play, advising me not to kill the king too soon, with other good counsel, such as might, if our mayor had not been a man of sagacity, have sent a poor authoress, in a *Mademoiselle-Scuderi-mistake*, to the Tower. That catastrophe would hardly have been worse than the real one. All my omissions have been found out. My price list has been compared with the bills. I have forfeited my credit for bargaining. I am become a bye-word for forgetting. Nobody trusts me to purchase a paper of pins, or to remember the cost of a penny riband. I am a lost woman. My bag is come back, but my fame is gone.

THE INQUISITIVE GENTLEMAN.

ONE of the most remarkable instances that I know of that generally false theory “the ruling passion,” is my worthy friend Samuel Lynx, Esq., of Lynx Hall in this county—commonly called the Inquisitive Gentleman. Never was cognomen better bestowed. Curiosity is, indeed, the master-principle of his mind, the life-blood of his existence, the main-spring of every movement.

Mr. Lynx is an old bachelor of large fortune and ancient family ;—the Lynxes of Lynx Hall have amused themselves with overlooking their neighbours’ doings for many generations. He is tall, but loses something of his height by a

constant habit of stooping; he carries his head projecting before his body,—like one who has just proposed a question and is bending forward to receive an answer. A lady being asked in his presence, what his features indicated, replied with equal truth and politeness—a most inquiring mind. The cock-up of the nose, which seems, from the expansion and movement of the nostrils, to be snuffing up intelligence, as a hound does the air of a dewy morning, when the scent lies well: the draw-down of the half-open mouth gaping for news; the erected chin; the wrinkled forehead; the little eager sparkling eyes, half-shut, yet full of curious meanings; the strong red eye-brows, protruded like a cat's whiskers or a snail's horns, *feelers*, which actually seem sentient! every line and lineament of that remarkable physiognomy betrays a craving for information. He is exceedingly short-sighted; and that defect also, although, on the first blush of the business, it might seem a disadvantage, conduces materially to the great purpose of his existence—the knowledge of other people's affairs. Sheltered by that infirmity, our “curious impertinent” can stare at things and persons through his glasses in a manner which even he would hardly venture with bare eyes. He can peep and pry and feel and handle with an effrontery, never equalled by an unspectacled man. He can ask the name and parentage of every body in company, toss over every book, examine every note and card, pull the flowers from the vases, take the pictures from the walls, the embroidery from your work-box, and the shawl off your back; and all with the most provoking composure, and just as if he was doing the right thing.

The propensity seems to have been born with him. He pants after secrets, just as magpies thief, and monkeys break china, by instinct. His nurse reports of him that he came peeping into the world; that his very cries were interrogative, and his experiments in physics so many and so dangerous, that before he was four years old, she was fain to tie his hands

behind him, and to lock him into a dark closet to keep him out of harm's way, chiefly moved thereto by his ripping open his own bed, to see what it was made of, and throwing her best gown into the fire to try if silk would burn. Then he was sent to school, a *preparatory* school, and very soon sent home again for incorrigible mischief. Then a private tutor undertook to instruct him on the interrogative system, which in his case was obliged to be reversed, he asking the questions, and the tutor delivering the responses—a new cast of the didactic drama. Then he went to college; then sallied forth to ask his way over Europe; then came back to fix on his paternal estate of Lynx Hall, where, except occasional short absences, he hath sojourned ever since, signalizing himself at every stage of existence, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, by the most lively and persevering curiosity, and by no other quality under heaven.

If he had not been so entirely devoid of ambition, I think that he might have attained to eminence in some smaller science, and have gained and received a name from a new moss, or an undiscovered butterfly. His keenness and sagacity would also have told well in antiquarian researches, particularly in any of the standing riddles of history, the Gowrie conspiracy, for instance, or the guilt of queen Mary, respecting which men may inquire and puzzle themselves from the first of January to the last of December without coming at all nearer to the solution. But he has no great pleasure in literature of any sort. Even the real parentage of the Waverly Novels, although nothing in the shape of a question comes amiss to him, did not interest him quite so much as might be expected; perhaps because it was so generally interesting. He prefers the “By-ways to the High-ways” of literature. The secrets of which every one talks are hardly, in his mind, “Secrets worth knowing.”

Besides, mere quiet guessing is not active enough for his stirring and searching faculty. He delights in the difficult,

the inaccessible, the hidden, the obscure. A forbidden place is his paradise ; a board announcing "steel-traps and spring-guns" will draw him over a wall twelve feet high ; he would undoubtedly have entered Blue-beard's closet, although certain to share the fate of his wives ; and has had serious thoughts of visiting Constantinople, just to indulge his taste by stealing a glimpse of the secluded beauties of the seraglio—an adventure which would probably have had no very fortunate termination. Indeed, our modern peeping Tom has encountered several mishaps at home in the course of his long search after knowledge ; and has generally had the very great aggravation of being altogether unpitied. Once, as he was taking a morning ride, in trying to look over a wall a little higher than his head, he raised himself in the saddle, and the sagacious quadruped his grey pony, an animal of a most accommodating and congenial spirit, having been, for that day, discarded in favour of a younger, gayer, less inquisitive and less patient steed, the new beast sprang on and left him sprawling. Once when, in imitation of Ranger, he had perched himself on the topmost round of a ladder, which he found placed beneath a window in Upper Berkeley-street, he lost his balance, and was pitched suddenly in through the sash, to the unspeakable consternation of a house-maid, who was rubbing the panes withinside. Once he was tossed into an open carriage, full of ladies, as he stood up to look at them from the box of a stage-coach. And once he got a grievous knock from a chimney-sweeper, as he poked his head into the chimney to watch his operations. He has been blown up by a rocket ; carried away in the strings of a balloon ; all but drowned in a diving bell ; lost a finger in a mashing-mill ; and broken a great toe by drawing a lead pincushion off a work table. N. B. This last-mentioned exploit spoilt my worthy old friend, Miss Sewaway, a beautiful piece of fine netting, "worth," as she pathetically remarked, "a thousand toes."

These are only a few of the bodily mischiefs that have be-

fallen poor Mr. Lynx. The moral scrapes, into which his unlucky propensity has brought him, are past all count. In his youth, although so little amorous that, I have reason to think, the formidable interrogatory, which is emphatically called "popping the question," is actually the only question which he has never popped ;—in his youth, he was very nearly drawn into wedlock by the sedulous attention which he paid to a young lady, whom he suspected of carrying on a clandestine correspondence. The mother scolded ; the father stormed ; the brother talked of satisfaction ; and poor Mr. Lynx, who is as pacific as a quaker, must certainly have been married, had not the fair nymph eloped to Gretna Green, the day before that appointed for the nuptials. So he got off for the fright. He hath undergone at least twenty challenges for different sorts of impertinences ; hath had his ears boxed and his nose pulled ; hath been knocked down and horsewhipped : all which casualties he bears with an exemplary patience. He hath been mistaken for a thief, a bailiff, and spy, abroad and at home ; and once, on the Sussex coast, was so inquisitive respecting the moon, and the tide, and the free trade, that he was taken at one and the same time, by the different parties, for a smuggler and a revenue officer, and narrowly escaped being shot in one capacity, and hanged in the other.

The evils which he inflicts bear a tolerably fair proportion to those which he endures. He is simply the most disagreeable man that lives. There is a curious infelicity about him which carries him straight to the wrong point. If there be such a thing as a sore subject, he is sure to press on it, to question a parvenu on his pedigree, a condemned author on his tragedy, and an old maid on her age. Besides these iniquities, his want of sympathy is so open and undisguised, that the most loquacious egotist loses the pleasure of talking of himself, in the evident absence of all feeling or interest on the part of the hearer. His conversation is always more like a judicial examination than any species of social intercourse,

and often like the worst sort of examination—cross-questioning. He demands, like a secretary to the Inquisition, and you answer (for you must answer) like a prisoner on the rack. Then the man is so mischievous ! He rattles old china, marches over flower-beds, and paws Urling's lace. The people at museums and exhibitions dread the sight of him. He cannot keep his hands from moths and humming-birds ; and once poked up a rattle-snake to discover whether the joints of the tail did actually produce the sound from which it derives its name ; by which attack that pugnacious reptile was excited to such wrath that two ladies fell into hysterics. He nearly demolished the Invisible Girl by too rough an inquiry into her existence, and got turned out of the automaton chess-player's territories, in consequence of an assault which he committed on that ingenious piece of mechanism. To do Mr. Lynx justice, I must admit that he sometimes does a little good to all this harm. He has, by design or accident, in the ordinary exercise of his vocation, hindered two or three duels, prevented a good deal of poaching and pilfering, and even saved his own house and the houses of his neighbours from divers burglaries ; his vigilance being, at least, as useful in that way as a watchman or an alarm-bell.

He makes but small use of his intelligence, however come by, which is perhaps occasioned by a distinctive difference of sex. A woman only half as curious would be prodigal of information—a spendthrift of news ; Mr. Lynx hoards his, like a miser. Possession is his idol. If I knew any thing which I particularly wished the world not to know, I should certainly tell it to him at once. A secret, with him, is as safe as money in the Bank ; the only peril lies in the ardour of his pursuit. One reason for his great discretion seems to me to be his total incapacity of speech—in any other than the interrogatory mood. His very tone is set to that key. I doubt if he can drop his voice at the end of a sentence, or knows the meaning of a full stop. Who ? What ? When ? Where ? How ? are

his catchwords ; and Eh ! his only interjection. Children and poor people, and all awkward persons who like to be talked to, and to talk again,—but do not very well understand how to set about it, delight in Mr. Lynx's notice. His catechetical mode of conversation enchants them, especially as he is of a liberal turn, and has generally some loose silver in his pocket, to bestow on a good answerer. To be sure the rapidity of his questions sometimes a little incommodes our country dames ; who when fairly set into a narrative of grievances do not care to be interrupted, but the honour of telling their histories, and the histories of all their neighbours, to a gentleman, makes ample amends for this little alloy. They are the only class who can endure his society, and he returns the compliment by showing a very decided preference for theirs. The obscure has a remarkable charm for him. To enjoy it in perfection, he will often repair to some great manufacturing town, where he is wholly unknown, and deposit himself in some suburban lodging in a new-built row, with poplars before the door, when, inviting his landlady to make tea for him, he gains, by aid of that genial beverage, an insight into all the loves and hatreds, "kitchen cabals and nursery mishaps," in a word, all the scandal of the town. Then he is happy.

Travelling is much to his taste ; as are also Stage Coaches, and Steam Packets, and Diligences, and generally all places where people meet and talk, especially an Inn, which is capital questioning ground, and safer than most other. There is a licence, a liberty, a freedom in the very name, and besides, people do not stay long enough to be affronted. He spends a good deal of his time in these privileged abodes, and is well known as the Inquisitive Gentleman, on most of the great roads, although his seat of Lynx Hall is undoubtedly his principal place of residence. It is most commodiously situated, on a fine eminence overlooking three counties ; and he spends most of his time in a sort of observatory, which he has built on a rising ground, at the edge of the park, where he has

mounted a telescope, by means of which he not only commands all the lanes and by-paths in the neighbourhood, but is enabled to keep a good look out, on the great northern road, two miles off, to oversee the stage coaches, and keep an eye on the mail. The manor lies in two parishes—another stroke of good fortune!—since the gossiping of both villages seems to belong to him of territorial right. Vestries, workhouses, schools, are all legitimate ground of inquiry. Besides, his long and intimate acquaintance with the neighbourhood is an inestimable advantage to a man of his turn of mind, and supplies, by detail and minuteness, what might be wanting in variety and novelty. He knows every man, woman, and child, horse, cow, pig, and dog, within half a dozen miles, and has a royal faculty of not forgetting, so that he has always plenty of matter for questions, and most of the people being his tenants, answers come quickly. He used—

As I live, here he is! just alighting from the grey pony, asking old Dame Wheeler what makes her lame on one side, and little Jemmy White why his jacket is ragged on the other—bawling to both—Dame Wheeler is deaf, and Jemmy stupid: and she is answering at cross purposes, and he staring with his mouth open, and not answering at all, and Mr. Lynx is pouring question on question, as fast as rain drops in a thunder-shower—Well, I must put away my desk, and my papers, especially *this*, for I should not quite like him to have the first benefit of the true and faithful likeness which I have been sketching;—I must put it away; folding and sealing will hardly do, for though I don't think—I can scarcely imagine, that he would actually break open a sealed packet,—yet man is frail! I have a regard for my old friend, and will not put him in the way of temptation.

THE OLD GIPSY.



WE have few gipsies in our neighbourhood. In spite of our tempting green lanes, our woody dells and heathy commons, the rogues don't take to us. I am afraid that we are too civilized, too cautious; that our sheep-folds are too closely watched; our barn-yards too well guarded; our geese and ducks too fastly penned; our chickens too securely locked up; our little pigs too safe in their sty; our game too scarce; our laundresses too careful. In short, we are too little primitive: we have a snug brood of vagabonds and poachers of our own, to say nothing of their regular followers, constables and justices of the peace:—we have stocks in the village, and a treadmill in the next town; and therefore we go gipsyless—a misfortune of which every landscape painter, and every lover of that living landscape, the country, can appreciate the extent. There is nothing under the sun that harmonizes so well with nature, especially in her woodland recesses, as that picturesque people, who are, so to say, the wild genus—the pheasants and roebucks of the human race.

Sometimes, indeed, we used to see a gipsy procession passing along the common, like an eastern caravan, men, women, and children, donkeys and dogs; and sometimes a patch of bare earth, strewed with ashes and surrounded with scathed turf, on the broad green margin of some cross road, would give token of a gipsy halt; but a regular gipsy encampment has always been so rare an event, that I was equally surprised and delighted to meet with one in the course of my walks last autumn, particularly as the party was of the most innocent description, quite free from those tall, dark, lean, Spanish looking men, who it must be confessed, with all my predilection for the caste, are rather startling to meet when alone in an unfrequented path: and a path more solitary than that into which the beauty of a bright October morning had tempted me could not well be imagined.

Branching off from the high road, a little below our village, runs a wide green lane, bordered on either side by a row of young oaks and beeches just within the hedge, forming an avenue, in which, on a summer afternoon, you may see the squirrels disporting from tree to tree, whilst the rooks, their fellow denizens, are wheeling in noisy circles over their heads. The fields sink gently down on each side, so that, being the bottom of a natural winding valley, and crossed by many little hills and rivulets, the turf exhibits even in the dryest summers an emerald verdure. Scarcely any one passes the end of that lane without wishing to turn into it; but the way is in some sort dangerous and difficult for foot passengers, because the brooklets which intersect it are in many instances bridgeless, and in others bestridden by planks so decayed, that it were rashness to pass them; and the nature of the ground, treacherous and boggy, and in many places as unstable as water, render it for carriages wholly impracticable.

I however, who do not dislike a little difficulty where there is no absolute danger, and who am moreover almost as familiar with the one only safe track as the heifers who graze there,

sometimes venture along this seldom-trodden path, which terminates, at the end of a mile and a half, in a spot of singular beauty. The hills become abrupt and woody, the cultivated enclosures cease, and the long narrow valley ends in a little green, bordered on one side by a fine old park, whose mossy paling, overhung with thorns and hollies, comes sweeping round it, to meet the rich coppices which clothe the opposite acclivity. Just under the high and irregular paling, shaded by the birches and sycamores of the park, and by the venerable oaks which are scattered irregularly on the green, is a dark deep pool, whose broken banks, crowned with fern and wreathed with brier and bramble, have an air of wildness and grandeur that might have suited the pencil of Salvator Rosa.

In this lonely place (for the mansion to which the park belongs has long been uninhabited) I first saw our gipsies. They had pitched their tent under one of the oak trees, perhaps from a certain dim sense of natural beauty, which those who live with nature in the fields are seldom totally without; perhaps because the neighbourhood of the coppices, and of the deserted hall, was favourable to the acquisition of game, and of the little fuel which their hardy habits required. The party consisted only of four—an old crone, in a tattered red cloak and black bonnet, who was stooping over a kettle, of which the contents were probably as savoury as that of Meg Merri-lies, renowned in story; a pretty black-eyed girl, at work under the trees; a sun-burnt urchin of eight or nine, collecting sticks and dead leaves to feed their out-of-door fire, and a slender lad two or three years older, who lay basking in the sun, with a couple of shabby dogs, of the sort called mongrel, in all the joy of idleness, whilst a grave patient donkey stood grazing hard-by. It was a pretty picture, with its soft autumnal sky, its rich woodiness, its sunshine, its verdure, the light smoke curling from the fire, and the group disposed around it so harmless, poor outcasts! and so happy—a beautiful picture! I stood gazing on it till I was half ashamed to

look longer, and came away half afraid that they should depart before I could see them again.

This fear I soon found to be groundless. The old gipsy was a celebrated fortune-teller, and the post having been so long vacant, she could not have brought her talents to a better market. The whole village rang with the predictions of this modern Cassandra—unlike her Trojan predecessor, inasmuch as her prophecies were never of evil. I myself could not help admiring the real cleverness, the genuine gipsy tact with which she adapted her foretellings to the age, the habits, and the known desires and circumstances of her clients.

To our little pet, Lizzy, for instance, a damsel of seven, she predicted a fairing ; to Ben Kirby, a youth of thirteen, head batter of the boys, a new cricket-ball ; to Ben's sister Lucy, a girl some three years his senior, and just promoted to that ensign of womanhood a cap, she promised a pink top-knot ; whilst for Miss Sophia Matthews, our old-maidish school-mistress, who would be heartily glad to be a girl again, she foresaw one handsome husband, and for the smart-widow Simmons, two. These were the least of her triumphs. George Davis, the dashing young farmer of the hill-house, a gay sportsman, who scoffed at fortune-tellers and matrimony, consulted her as to whose greyhound would win the courser's cup at the beacon meeting : to which she replied, that she did not know to whom the dog would belong, but that the winner of the cup would be a white greyhound, with one blue ear, and a spot on its side, being an exact description of Mr. George Davis's favourite Helen, who followed her master's steps like his shadow, and was standing behind him at this very instant. This prediction gained our gipsy half-a-crown. And Master Welles—the thriving thrifty yeoman of the Lea—she managed to win sixpence from his hard honest frugal hand, by a prophecy that his old brood mare, called Blackfoot, should bring forth twins. And Ned the blacksmith, who was known to court the tall nursemaid at the mill—she got a shilling from Ned, simply by assuring him that his wife should

have the longest coffin that ever was made in our wheelwright's shop. A most tempting prediction ! ingeniously combining the prospect of winning and of surviving the lady of his heart—a promise equally adapted to the hot and cold fits of that ague called love ; lightening the fetters of wedlock ; uniting in a breath the bridegroom and the widower. Ned was the best pleased of all her customers, and enforced his suit with such vigour, that he and the fair giantess were asked in church the next Sunday, and married at the fortnight's end.

No wonder that all the world—that is to say, all our world—were crazy to have their fortunes told—to enjoy the pleasure of hearing from such undoubted authority, that what they wished to be should be. Amongst the most eager to take a peep into futurity, was our pretty maid Harriet, although her desire took the not unusual form of disclamation—"nothing should induce her to have her fortune told, nothing upon earth ! She never thought of the gipsy, not she !" and, to prove the fact, she said so at least twenty times a day. Now Harriet's fortune seemed told already ; her destiny was fixed. She, the belle of the village, was engaged, as every body knows, to our village beau, Joel Brent ; they were only waiting for a little more money to marry ; and as Joel was already head carter to our head farmer, and had some prospect of a bailiff's place, their union did not appear very distant. But Harriet, besides being a beauty, was a coquette, and her affection for her betrothed did not interfere with certain flirtations which came in like Isabella, "by the bye," and occasionally cast a shadow of coolness between the lovers, which, however, Joel's cleverness and good-humour generally contrived to chase away. There had probably been a little fracas in the present instance, for at the end of one of her daily professions of unfaith in gipsies and their predictions, she added, "that none but fools did believe them ; that Joel had had his fortune told, and wanted to treat her to a prophecy—but she was not such a simpleton."

About an hour after the delivery of this speech, I happened,

in tying up a chrysanthemum, to go to our wood-yard for a stick of proper dimensions, and there, enclosed between the faggot-pile and the coal-shed, stood the gipsy, in the very act of palmistry, conning the lines of fate in Harriet's hand. Never was a stronger contrast than that between the old withered sibyl, dark as an Egyptian, with bright laughing eyes, and an expression of keen humour under all her affected solemnity, and our village beauty, tall, and plump, and fair, blooming as a rose, and simple as a dove. She was listening too intently to see me, but the fortune-teller did, and stopped so suddenly, that her attention was awakened, and the intruder discovered:

Harriet at first meditated a denial. She called up a pretty innocent unconcerned look ; answered my silence (for I never spoke a word) by muttering something about "coals for the parlour ;" and catching up my new-painted green watering-pot, instead of the coal-scuttle, began filling it with all her might, to the unspeakable discomfiture of that useful utensil, on which the dingy dust stuck like birdlime—and of her own clean apron, which exhibited a curious interchange of black and green on a white ground. During the process of filling the watering-pot, Harriet made divers signs to the gipsy to decamp. The old sibyl, however, budged not a foot, influenced probably by two reasons, one, the hope of securing a customer in the new comer, whose appearance is generally, I am afraid, the very reverse of dignified, rather merry than wise ; the other, a genuine fear of passing through the yard-gate, on the outside of which a much more imposing person, my greyhound Mayflower, who has a sort of beadle instinct anent drunkards and pilferers, and disorderly persons of all sorts, stood barking most furiously.

This instinct is one of May's remarkable qualities. Dogs are all, more or less, physiognomists, and commonly pretty determined aristocrats, fond of the fine and averse to the shabby, distinguishing, with a nice accuracy, the master castes

from the pariahs of the world. But May's power of perception is another matter, more, as it were, moral. She has no objection to honest rags; can away with dirt, or age, or ugliness, or any such accident, and, except just at home, makes no distinction between kitchen and parlour. Her intuition points entirely to the race of people commonly called suspicious, on whom she pounces at a glance. What a constable she would have made! What a jewel of a thief-taker! Pity that those four feet should stand in the way of her preferment! she might have risen to be a Bow-street officer. As it is we make the gift useful in a small way. In the matter of hiring and marketing the whole village likes to consult May. Many a chap has stared when she has been whistled up to give her opinion as to his honesty; and many a pig bargain has gone off on her veto. Our neighbour, mine host of the Rose, used constantly to follow her judgment in the selection of his lodgers. His house was never so orderly as when under her government. At last he found out that she abhorred tipplers as well as thieves—indeed, she actually barked away three of his best customers: and he left off appealing to her sagacity, since which he has, at different times, lost three silver spoons and a leg of mutton. With every one else May is an oracle. Not only in the case of wayfarers and vagrants, but amongst our own people, her fancies are quite a touchstone. A certain hump-backed cobbler, for instance—May cannot abide him, and I don't think he has had so much as a job of heel-piecing to do since her dislike became public. She really took away his character.

Longer than I have taken to relate Mayflower's accomplishments stood we, like the folks in the Critic, at a dead lock; May, who probably regarded the gipsy as a sort of rival, an interloper on her oracular domain, barking with the voice of a lioness—the gipsy trying to persuade me into having my fortune told—and I endeavouring to prevail on May to let the gipsy pass. Both attempts were unsuccessful: and the fair consulter of destiny, who had by this time recovered from the

shame of her detection, extricated us from our dilemma by smuggling the old woman away through the house.

Of course Harriet was exposed to some raillery, and a good deal of questioning about her future fate, as to which she preserved an obstinate, but evidently satisfied silence. At the end of three days, however—my readers are, I hope, learned enough in gipsy lore to know, that unless kept secret for three entire days, no prediction can come true—at the end of three days, when all the family except herself had forgotten the story, our pretty soubrette, half bursting with the long retention, took the opportunity of lacing on my new half-boots to reveal the prophecy. “She was to see within the week, and this was Saturday, the young man, the real young man, whom she was to marry.”—“Why, Harriet, you know poor Joel.”—“Joel, indeed! the gipsy said that the young man, the real young man, was to ride up to the house drest in a dark great-coat, (and Joel never wore a great-coat in his life—all the world knew that he wore smock-frocks and jackets,) and mounted on a white horse—and where should Joel get a white horse?”—“Had this real young man made his appearance yet?”—“No; there had not been a white horse past the place since Tuesday; so it must certainly be to-day.”

A good look-out did Harriet keep for white horses during this fateful Saturday, and plenty did she see. It was the market-day at B., and team after team came by with one, two, and three white horses; cart after cart, and gig after gig, each with a white steed: Colonel M.’s carriage, with its prancing pair—but still no horseman. At length one appeared; but he had a great-coat whiter than the animal he rode; another, but he was old farmer Lewington, a married man; a third, but he was little Lord L., a school-boy, on his Arabian pony. Besides, they all passed the house; and as the day wore on, Harriet began, alternately, to possess her old infidelity on the score of fortune-telling, and to let out certain apprehensions that, if the gipsy did really possess the power of foresee-

ing events, and no such horseman arrived, she might possibly be unlucky enough to die an old maid—a fate for which, although the proper destiny of a coquette, our village beauty seemed to entertain a very decided aversion.

At last, just at dusk, just as Harriet, making believe to close our casement shutters, was taking her last peep up the road, something white appeared in the distance coming leisurely down the hill. Was it really a horse? Was it not rather Titus Strong's cow driving home to milking? A minute or two dissipated that fear; it certainly was a horse, and as certainly it had a dark rider. Very slowly he descended the hill, pausing most provokingly at the end of the village, as if about to turn up the Vicarage-lane. He came on, however, and after another short stop at the Rose, rode up full to our little gate, and catching Harriet's hand as she was opening the wicket, displayed to the half-pleased, half-angry damsel, the smiling triumphant face of her own Joel Brent, equipped in a new great coat, and mounted on his master's newly purchased market nag. Oh, Joel! Joel! The gipsy! the gipsy!

LITTLE RACHEL.

IN one of the wild nooks of heath land, which are set so prettily amidst our richly timbered valleys, stands the cottage of Robert Ford, an industrious and substantial blacksmith. There is a striking appearance of dingy comfort about the whole demesne, forming as it does a sort of detached and isolated territory in the midst of the unenclosed common by which it is surrounded. The ample garden, whose thick dusty quickset hedge runs along the high road; the snug cottage, whose gable-end abuts on the causeway; the neat court which parts the house from the long low-browed shop

and forge; and the stable, cart-shed, and piggeries behind, have all an air of rustic opulence: even the clear irregular pond, half covered with ducks and geese, that adjoins, and the old pollard oak, with a milestone leaning against it, that overhangs the dwelling, seem in accordance with its consequence and character, and give finish and harmony to the picture.

The inhabitants were also in excellent keeping. Robert Ford, a stout, hearty, middle-aged man, sooty and grim as a collier, paced backward and forward between the house and the forge with the step of a man of substance—his very leather apron had an air of importance; his wife Dinah, a merry comely woman, sat at the open door, in an amplitude of cap and gown and handkerchief, darning an eternal worsted stocking, and hailed the passers-by with the cheerful freedom of one well to do in the world; and their three sons, well-grown lads from sixteen to twenty, were the pride of the village for industry and good-humour—to say nothing of their hereditary love of cricket. On a Sunday, when they had on their best clothes and cleanest faces, they were the handsomest youths in the parish. Robert Ford was proud of his boys, as well he might be, and Dinah was still prouder.

Altogether it was a happy family and a pretty scene; especially of an evening, when the forge was at work, and when the bright firelight shone through the large unglazed window, illumining with its strange red unearthly light, the group that stood round the anvil; showers of sparks flying from the heated iron, and the loud strokes of the sledge-hammer resounding over all the talking and laughing of the workmen, re-enforced by three or four idlers who were lounging about the shop. It formed a picture, which in a summer evening we could seldom pass without stopping to contemplate; besides I had a road-side acquaintance with Mrs. Ford, had taken shelter in her cottage from thunder-storms and snow-storms, and even by daylight could not walk by without a friendly "How d'ye do."

Late in last autumn we observed an addition to the family, in the person of a pretty little shy lass, of some eight years old, a fair slim small-boned child, with delicate features, large blue eyes, a soft colour, light shining hair, and a remarkable neatness in her whole appearance. She seemed constantly busy, either sitting on a low stool by Dinah's side at needle-work, or gliding about the kitchen engaged in some household employment—for the wide open door generally favoured the passengers with a full view of the interior, from the fully stored bacon-rack to the nicely swept hearth; and the little girl, if she perceived herself to be looked at, would slip behind the clock-case, or creep under the dresser to avoid notice. Mrs. Ford, when questioned as to her new inmate, said that she was her husband's niece, the daughter of a younger brother, who had worked some where London-way, and had died lately, leaving a widow with eleven children in distressed circumstances. She added, that having no girl of their own, they had taken little Rachel for good and all; and vaunted much of her handiness, her sempstress-ship, and her scholarship, how she could read a chapter with the parish clerk or make a shirt with the schoolmistress. Hereupon she called her to display her work, which was indeed extraordinary for so young a needle-woman; and would fain have had her exhibit her accomplishment of reading; but the poor little maid hung down her head, and blushed up to her white temples, and almost cried, and though too frightened to run away, shrank back till she was fairly hidden behind her portly aunt; so that that performance was perforce pretermitted. Mrs. Ford was rather scandalized at this shyness; and expostulated, coaxed, and scolded, after the customary fashion on such occasions. "Shame-facedness was," she said, "Rachel's only fault, and she believed the child could not help it. Her uncle and cousins were as fond of her as fond could be, but she was afraid of them all, and had never entered the shop since there she had been. Rachel," she added, "was

singular in all her ways, and never spent a farthing on apples or gingerbread, though she had a bran new sixpence, which her uncle had given her for hemming his cravats; she believed that she was saving it to send home."

A month passed away, during which time, from the mere habit of seeing us frequently, Rachel became so far tamed as to behold me and my usual walking companion without much dismay; would drop her little curtsy without colouring so very deeply, and was even won to accept a bun from that dear companion's pocket, and to answer yes or no to his questions.

At the end of that period, as we were returning home in the twilight from a round of morning visits, we perceived a sort of confusion in the forge, and heard loud sounds of scolding from within the shop, mixed with bitter lamentations from without. On a nearer approach, we discovered that the object in distress was an old acquaintance; a young Italian boy, such a wanderer from the lake of Como, as he whom Wordsworth has addressed so beautifully:

—" Or on thy head to poise a show
Of plaster-craft in seemly row;
The graceful form of milk-white steed,
Or bird that soared with Ganymede;
Or through our hamlets thou wilt bear
The sightless Milton with his hair
Around the placid temples curled,
And Shakspeare at his side—a freight,
If clay could think and mind were weight,
For him who bore the world!"

He passed us almost every day, carrying his tray full of images into every quarter of the village. We had often wondered how he could find vent for his commodities; but our farmers' wives patronize that branch of art; and Stefano, with his light firm step, his upright carriage, his dancing eyes, and his broken English, was an universal favourite.

At present the poor boy's keen Italian features and bright

dark eyes were disfigured by crying ; and his loud wailings and southern gesticulations bore witness to the extremity of his distress. The cause of his grief was visible in the half empty tray that rested on the window of the forge, and the green parrot which lay in fragments on the footpath. The wrath of Robert Ford required some further explanation, which the presence of his worship instantly brought forth, although the enraged blacksmith was almost too angry to speak intelligibly.

It appeared that his youngest and favourite son, William, had been chaffering with Stefano for this identical green parrot, to present to Rachel, when a mischievous lad, running along the road, had knocked it from the window sill, and reduced it to the state which we saw. So far was mere misfortune ; and undoubtedly, if left to himself, our good neighbour would have indemnified the little merchant ; but poor Stefano, startled at the suddenness of the accident, trembling at the anger of the severe master on whose account he travelled the country, and probably in the darkness really mistaking the offender, unluckily accused William Ford of the overthrow ; which accusation, although the assertion was instantly and humbly retracted on William's denial, so aroused the English blood of the father, a complete John Bull, that he was raving till black in the face against cheats and foreigners, and threatening the young Italian with whipping, and the treadmill, and justices, and stocks, when we made our appearance, and the storm having nearly exhausted its fury, gradually abated.

By this time, however, the clamour had attracted a little crowd of lookers on from the house and the road, amongst the rest Mrs. Ford, and, peeping behind her aunt, little Rachel. Stefano continued to exclaim in his imperfect accent—"He will beat me !" and to sob and crouch and shiver, as if actually suffering under the impending chastisement. It was impossible not to sympathize with such a reality of distress, although we felt that an English boy, similarly situated, would have

been too stout-hearted not to restrain its expression. "Sixpence!" and "my master will beat me!" intermixed with fresh bursts of crying, were all his answers to the various inquiries as to the amount of his loss, with which he was assailed; and young William Ford, "a lad of grace," was approaching his hand to his pocket, and my dear companion had just drawn forth his purse, when the good intentions of the one were arrested by the stern commands of his father, and the other was stopped by the re-appearance of Rachel, who had run back to the house; and now darted through the group, holding out her own new sixpence—her hoarded sixpence, and put it into Stefano's hand!

It may be imagined that the dear child was no loser by her generosity: she was loaded with caresses by every one, which, too much excited to feel her bashfulness, she not only endured but returned. Her uncle, thus rebuked by an infant, was touched almost to tears. He folded her in his arms, kissed her and blessed her; gave Stefano half-a-crown for the precious sixpence, and swore to keep it as a relique and a lesson as long as he lived.

THE YOUNG GIPSY.

THE weather continuing fine and dry, I did not fail to revisit my gipsy encampment, which became more picturesque every day in the bright sun-gleams and lengthening shadows of a most brilliant autumn. A slight frost had strewed the green lane with the light yellow leaves of the elm—those leaves on whose yielding crispness it is so pleasant to tread, and which it is so much pleasanter to watch whirling along, "thin dancers upon air," in the fresh October breeze; whilst the reddened beech, and spotted sycamore, and the rich oaks dropping with

acorns, their foliage just edging into its deep orange brown, added all the magic of colour to the original beauty of the scenery. It was undoubtedly the prettiest walk in the neighbourhood, and the one which I frequented the most.

Ever since the adventure of May, the old fortune-teller and I understood each other perfectly. She knew that I was no client, no patient, no customer, (which is the fittest name for a goosecap who goes to a gipsy to ask what is to befall her?) but she also knew that I was no enemy to either her or her profession; for after all, if people choose to amuse themselves by being simpletons, it is no part of their neighbours' business to hinder them. I, on my side, liked the old gipsy exceedingly; I liked both her humour and her good-humour, and had a real respect for her cleverness. We always interchanged a smile and a nod, meet where we might. May, too, had become accustomed to the whole party. The gift of a bone from the cauldron—a bare bone—your well-fed dog likes nothing so well as such a windfall, and if stolen the relish is higher—a bare bone brought about that reconciliation. I am sorry to accuse May of accepting a bribe, but such was the fact. She now looked at the fortune-teller with great complacency, would let the boys stroke her long neck, and in her turn, would condescend to frolic with their shabby curs, who, trained to a cat-like caution and mistrust of their superiors, were as much alarmed at her advances as if a lioness had offered herself as their play-fellow. There was no escaping her civility, however, so they submitted to their fate, and really seemed astonished to find themselves alive when the gambol was over. One of them, who from a tail turned over his back like a squirrel, and an amazingly snub nose, had certainly some mixture of the pug in his composition, took a great fancy to her when his fright was past; which she repaid by the sort of scornful kindness, the despotic protection, proper to her as a beauty, and a favourite, and a high-blooded greyhound—always a most proud and stately creature. The

poor little mongrel used regularly to come jumping to meet her, and she as regularly turned him over and over and over, and round and round and round, like a tetotum. He liked it apparently, for he never failed to come and court the tossing whenever she went near him.

The person most interesting to me of the whole party was the young girl. She was remarkably pretty, and of the peculiar prettiness which is so frequently found amongst that singular people. Her face resembled those which Sir Joshua has often painted—rosy, round, and bright, set in such a profusion of dark curls, lighted by such eyes, and such a smile! and she smiled whenever you looked at her—she could not help it. Her figure was light and small, of low stature, and with an air of great youthfulness. In her dress she was, for a gipsy, surprisingly tidy. For the most part, that ambulatory race have a preference for rags, as forming their most appropriate wardrobe, being a part of their tools of trade, their insignia of office. I do not imagine that Harriet's friend, the fortune-teller, would have exchanged her stained tattered cloak for the thickest and brightest red cardinal that ever came out of a woollen-draper's shop. And she would have been a loser if she had. Take away that mysterious mantle, and a great part of her reputation would go too. There is much virtue in an old cloak. I question if the simplest of her clients, even Harriet herself, would have consulted her in a new one. But the young girl was tidy; not only accurately clean, and with clothes neatly and nicely adjusted to her trim little form, but with the rents darned, and the holes patched, in a way that I should be glad to see equalled by our own villagers.

Her manners were quite as ungipsy-like as her apparel, and so was her conversation; for I could not help talking to her, and was much pleased with her frankness and innocence, and the directness and simplicity of her answers. She was not the least shy; on the contrary, there was a straight-for-

ward look, a fixing of her sweet eyes full of pleasure and reliance right upon you, which, in the description, might seem almost too assured, but which, in reality, no more resembled vulgar assurance than did the kindred artlessness of Shakspeare's Miranda. It seems strange to liken a gipsy girl to that loveliest creation of genius ; but I never saw that innocent gaze without being sure that just with such a look of pleased attention, of affectionate curiosity, did the island princess listen to Ferdinand.

All that she knew of her little story she told without scruple, in a young liquid voice, and with a little curtsy between every answer, that became her extremely. " Her name," she said, " was Fanny. She had no father or mother ; they were dead ; and she and her brothers lived with her grandmother. They lived always out of doors, sometimes in one place—sometimes in another ; but she should like always to live under that oak-tree, it was so pleasant. Her grandmother was very good to them all, only rather particular. She loved her very much ; and she loved Dick, (her eldest brother,) though he was a sad unlucky boy, to be sure. She was afraid he would come to some bad end."

And, indeed, Dick at that moment seemed in imminent danger of verifying his sister's prediction. He had been trying for a gleaning of nuts amongst the tall hazels on the top of a bank, which, flanked by a deep ditch, separated the cop-pice from the green. We had heard him for the last five minutes smashing and crashing away at a prodigious rate, swinging himself from stalk to stalk, and tugging and climbing like a sailor or a monkey ; and now, at the very instant of Fanny's uttering this prophecy, having missed a particularly venturesome grasp, he was impelled forward by the rebound of the branches, and fell into the ditch with a tremendous report, bringing half the nuttery after him, and giving us all a notion that he had broken his neck. His time, however, was not yet come : he was on his feet again in half a minute and

in another half minute we again heard him rustling among the hazel boughs ; and Fanny and I went on with our talk, which the fright and scolding, consequent on this accident, had interrupted. My readers are of course aware, that when any one meets with a fall, the approved medicament of the most affectionate relatives is a good dose of scolding.

"She liked Dick," she continued, "in spite of his unluckiness—he was so quick and good-humoured ; but the person she loved most was her youngest brother, Willy. Willy was the best boy in the world, he would do any thing she told him," (indeed the poor child was in the very act of picking up acorns under her inspection, to sell, as I afterwards found, in the village,) "and never got into mischief, or told a lie in his life ; she had had the care of him ever since he was born, and she wished she could get him a place." By this time the little boy had crept towards us, and still collecting the acorns in his small brown hands, had turned up his keen intelligent face, and was listening with great interest to our conversation. "A place !" said I, much surprised. "Yes," replied she firmly, "a place. 'Twould be a fine thing for my poor Willy to have a house over him in the cold winter nights." And with a grave tenderness, that might have beseemed a young mother, she stooped her head over the boy, and kissed him. "But *you* sleep out of doors in the cold winter nights, Fanny?"—"Me ! oh, I don't mind it, and sometimes we creep into a barn. But poor Willy ! If I could but get Willy a place, my lady !"

This "my lady," the first gipsy word that Fanny had uttered, lost all that it would have had of unpleasing in the generosity and affectionateness of the motive. I could not help promising to recommend her Willy, although I could not hold out any very strong hopes of success, and we parted, Fanny following me, with thanks upon thanks, almost to the end of the lane.

Two days after I again saw my pretty gipsy ; she was standing by the side of our gate, too modest even to enter the court,

waiting for my coming out to speak to me. I brought her into the hall, and was almost equally delighted to see her, and to hear her news; for although I had most faithfully performed my promise, by mentioning master Willy to every body likely to want a servant of his qualifications, I had seen enough in the course of my canvass to convince me that a gipsy boy of eight years old would be a difficult protégé to provide for.

Fanny's errand relieved my perplexity. She came to tell me that Willy had gotten a place—"That Thomas Lamb, my lord's head gamekeeper, had hired him to tend his horse and his cow, and serve the pigs, and feed the dogs, and dig the garden, and clean the shoes and knives, and run on errands—in short, to be a man of all work. Willy was gone that very morning. He had cried to part with her, and she had almost cried herself, she should miss him so; he was like her own child. But then it was such a great place; and Thomas Lamb seemed such a kind master—talked of new clothing him, and meant him to wear shoes and stockings, and was very kind indeed. But poor Willy had cried sadly at leaving her,"—and the sweet matronly elder sister fairly cried too.

I comforted her all I could, first by praises of Thomas Lamb, who happened to be of my acquaintance, and was indeed the very master whom, had I had the choice, I would have selected for Willy; and secondly, by the gift of some unconsidered trifles, which one should have been ashamed to offer to any one who had ever had a house over her head, but which the pretty gipsy girl received with transport, especially some working materials of the commonest sort. Poor Fanny had never known the luxury of a thimble before; it was as new to her finger as shoes and stockings were likely to be to Willy's feet. She forgot her sorrows, and tripped home to her oak-tree, the happiest of the happy.

Thomas Lamb, Willy's new master, was, as I have said, of my acquaintance. He was a remarkably fine young man, and as well-mannered as those of his calling usually are. Gener-

ally speaking there are no persons, excepting real gentlemen, so gentlemanly as gamekeepers. They keep good company. The beautiful and graceful creatures whom they at once preserve and pursue, and the equally noble and generous animals whom they train, are their principal associates; and even by their masters they are regarded rather as companions than as servants. They attend them in their sports more as guides and leaders than as followers, pursuing a common recreation with equal enjoyment, and often with superior skill. Gamekeepers are almost always well behaved, and Thomas Lamb was eminently so. He had quite the look of a man of fashion; the person, the carriage, the air. His figure was tall and striking; his features delicately carved, with a paleness of complexion, and a slight appearance of ill-health that added to their elegance. In short, he was exactly what the ladies would have called interesting in a gentleman; and the gentleness of his voice and manner, and the constant propriety of his deportment, tended to confirm the impression.

Luckily for him, however, this delicacy and refinement lay chiefly on the surface. His constitution, habits, and temper, were much better fitted to his situation, much hardier and heartier, than they appeared to be. He was still a bachelor, and lived by himself in a cottage, almost as lonely as if it had been placed in a desert island. It stood in the centre of his preserves, in the midst of a wilderness of coppice and woodland, accessible only by a narrow winding path, and at least a mile from the nearest habitation. When you had threaded the labyrinth, and were fairly arrived in Thomas's dominion, it was a pretty territory. A low thatched cottage, very irregularly built, with a porch before the door, and a vine half covering the casements; a garden a good deal neglected, (Thomas Lamb's four-footed subjects, the hares, took care to eat up all his flowers: hares are animals of taste, and are particularly fond of pinks and carnations, the rogues!) an orchard and a meadow completed the demesne. There was also a

commodious dog-kennel, and a stable, of which the outside was completely covered with the trophies of Thomas's industry—kites, jackdaws, magpies, hawks, crows, and owls, nailed by the wings, *displayed*, as they say in heraldry, against the wall, with polecats, weazels, stoats, and hedgehogs figuring at their side, a perfect menagerie of dead game-killers.*

But the prettiest part of this woodland cottage was the real living game that flitted about it, as tame as barn-door fowls; partridges flocking to be fed, as if there were not a dog, or a gun, or a man in the world; pheasants, glorious creatures! coming at a call; hares almost as fearless as Cowper's, that would stand and let you look at them: would let you approach quite near, before they raised one quivering ear and darted off; and that even then, when the instinct of timidity was aroused, would turn at a safe distance to look again. Poor, pretty things! What a pity it seemed to kill them!

Such was to be Willy's future habitation. The day after he entered upon his place, I had an opportunity of offering my double congratulations, to the master on his new servant, to the servant on his new master. Whilst taking my usual walk, I found Thomas Lamb, Dick, Willy, and Fanny, about half-way up the lane, engaged in the animating sport of unearthing a weazel, which one of the gipsy dogs followed into a hole by the ditch-side. The boys showed great sportmanship on this occasion: and so did their poor curs, who, with their whole bodies inserted into the different branches of the burrow, and nothing visible but their tails, (the one, the long puggish brush, of which I have already made mention, the

* Foxes, the destruction of which is so great an object in a pheasant preserve, never are displayed, especially if there be a pack of hounds in the neighbourhood. That odious part of a gamekeeper's occupation is as quietly and unostentatiously performed as any operation of gunnery can be. Lords of manors will even affect to preserve foxes—Heaven forgive them! just as an unpopular ministry is sure to talk of protecting the liberty of the subject.

other a terrier-like stump, that maintained an incessant wag,) continued to dig and scratch, throwing out showers of earth, and whining with impatience and eagerness. Every now and then, when quite gasping and exhausted, they came out for a moment's air; whilst the boys took their turn, poking with a long stick, or loosening the ground with their hands, and Thomas stood by, superintending and encouraging both dog and boy, and occasionally cutting a root or a bramble that impeded their progress. Fanny, also, entered into the pursuit with great interest, dropping here and there a word of advice, as nobody can help doing when they see others in perplexity. In spite of all these aids, the mining operation proceeded so slowly, that the experienced keeper sent off his new attendant for a spade to dig out the vermin, and I pursued my walk.

After this encounter, it so happened that I never went near the gipsy tent without meeting Thomas Lamb—sometimes on foot, sometimes on his pony; now with a gun, and now without; but always loitering near the oak-tree, and always, as it seemed, reluctant to be seen. It was very unlike Thomas's usual manner to seem ashamed of being caught in any place, or in any company; but so it was. Did he go to the ancient sibyl to get his fortune told? or was Fanny the attraction? A very short time solved the query.

One night, towards the end of the month, the keeper presented himself at our house on justice business. He wanted a summons for some poachers who had been committing depredations in the preserve. Thomas was a great favourite; and was, of course, immediately admitted, his examination taken, and his request complied with. "But how," said the magistrate, looking up from the summons which he was signing, "how can you expect, Thomas, to keep your pheasants, when that gipsy boy with his finders has pitched his tent just in the midst of your best coppices, killing more game than half the poachers in the country?"—"Why, as to the gipsy, sir," re-

plied Thomas, "Fanny is as good a girl—" "I was not *talking* of Fanny," interrupted the man of warrants, *smiling*,—"as good a girl," pursued Thomas—"A very *pretty* girl!" ejaculated his worship,—*"as good a girl,"* resumed Thomas, "as ever trod the earth!"—"A *sweet pretty* creature, certainly," was again the provoking reply. "Ah, sir, if you could but hear how her little brother talks of her!"—"Why, Thomas, this gipsy *has made* an impression."—"Ah, sir! she is such a good girl!"—and the next day they were married.

It was a measure to set every tongue in the village a wagging; for Thomas, besides his personal good gifts, was well to do in the world—my lord's head keeper, and prime favourite. He might have pretended to any farmer's daughter in the parish: every body cried out against the match. It was rather a bold measure, certainly; but I think it will end well. They are, beyond a doubt, the handsomest couple in these parts; and as the fortune-teller and her eldest grandson have had the good sense to decamp, and Fanny, besides being the most grateful and affectionate creature on earth, turns out clever and docile, and comports herself just as if she had lived in a house all her days, there are some hopes that in process of time her sin of gipsyism may be forgiven, and Mrs. Lamb be considered as visitable, at least by her next neighbours, the wives of the shoemaker and the parish clerk. At present, I am sorry to say that those worthy persons have sent both Thomas and her to Coventry—a misfortune which they endure with singular resignation.

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE THIRD SERIES.*

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

“ANY changes in our Village since the last advices? What news of May and Lizzy and Fanny and Lucy? Is the pretty nymph of the shoe-shop married yet? And does the Loddon continue to flow as brightly as when we gathered musk roses together in the old grounds of Aberleigh?”

These interrogatories formed part of a letter from India, written by my pretty friend, Emily L., now the wife of an officer of rank on that station; and my answer to her kind questioning may serve to satisfy the curiosity of other gentle readers as to the general state of our little commonwealth, and form no unfit introduction to the more detailed narratives that follow. They who condescend to read the letter-press will have the advantage of my fair correspondent. Indeed I doubt whether she herself may not derive her first information from the printed book; my epistle being, as far as I can judge, wholly illegible to all but the writer. Never was such a manuscript seen! for being restricted to one sheet of paper, and having a good deal of miscellaneous matter to discuss before entering on our village affairs, I had fallen into a silly fashion of crossing, not uncommon amongst young ladies; so that my letter, first written horizontally like other people's, then perpendicularly to form a sort of chequer-work, then diagonally in red ink,—the very crossings crossed!—and every nook and cranny, the part under the seal, the corner where the date stood, covered with small lines in an invisible hand, the whole letter became a mass of mysterious marks, a puzzle like a Coptic inscription, or a state paper in cipher to those unacquainted with the key. I must put an extract into print, if only for the benefit of my correspondent; and here it is.

“‘Any change in our Village?’ say you.—Why no, not much. In the outward world scarcely any, except the erection of two handsome red houses on the outskirts, which look very ugly just at present, simply because the eye and the landscape are unaccustomed to them, but which will set us off amazingly when the trees and the buildings become used to each other, and the glaring new tint is toned down by that great artist, the

* [Of the original edition.]

weather. For the rest the street remains quite in *statu quo*, unless we may count for alteration a *rifacimento* which is taking place in the dwelling of our worthy neighbour the baker, whose oven fell in last week, and is in the act of being re-constructed by a scientific bricklayer (Ah dear me! I dare say he hath a finer name for his calling) from the good town of B. The precise merits of this new oven I cannot pretend to explain, although they have been over and over explained to me; I only know that it is to be heated on some new-fangled principle, hot water, or hot air, or steam, or cinders, which is to cost just nothing, and is to produce the staff of life, crust and crumb, in such excellence as hath not been equalled since Alfred, the first baker of quality on record, had the misfortune to scorch his hostess's cake. I suspect that the result of this experiment will not be very dissimilar; but at present it is a great point of interest to the busy and the idle. Half of our cricketers are there helping or hindering, and all the children of the street are assembled to watch the operation, or clustered into groups near the door.

"You used to say, and there was too much truth in the assertion, that for pigs, geese, and children, and their concomitants, dirt and noise, this pretty place was unrivalled. But then you were here when the two first evils were at their height, in June and July. At present the geese have felt the stroke of Michaelmas, and are fatted and thinned; pigs too have diminished; though as the children are proportionably increased, we are not much better off in point of cleanliness, and much worse in regard to noise:—a pig being, except just when ringing or killing, a tolerably silent animal; and a goose, in spite of the old Roman story, only vociferous by fits and starts; whereas little boys and little girls—at least, the little boys and little girls hereabout—seem to me on the full cry or the full shout from sunrise to sunset. Even the dinner hour, that putter down of din in most civilized countries, makes no pause amongst our small people. The nightingale who sings all day and all night to solace his brooding mate is but a type of their unwearying power of voice. His sweet harmony doth find intervals; their discord hath none.

"And yet they have light hearts too, poor urchins; witness Dame Wilson's three sun-burnt ragged boys, who, with Ben Kirby and a few comrades of lesser note, are bawling and squabbling at marbles on one side of the road; and Master Andrews's four fair-haired girls, who are scrambling and squalling at baseball on the other! How happy they are, poor things, and with how few of the implements of happiness beyond sunshine and liberty and their own young life! Even the baker's and the wheelwright's children are stealing a run and a race up the hill as they go to school, and managing to make quite noise enough to attract attention; although being in whole frocks they are rather more quiet than their compeers in tatters,

and hardly so merry; it being an axiom which I have rarely known to fail in country life, that the poorer the urchin, the fuller of glee. Short of starvation, nothing tames the elves. Blessed triumph of youthful spirits! merciful compensation for a thousand wants!

"Even as I write there is another childish rabble passing the window in the wake of our friend Mr. Moore's donkey-cart. You remember Mr. Moore's fine strawberries, Emily? the real wood strawberry, which looked like a gem, and smelt like a nosegay? But strawberries are out of season now; and the donkey-cart has changed its gay summer freight of fruit and flowers, and is coming down the hill heavily laden with a full dirty homely load of huge red potatoes, to vend per peck and gallon through the village, or perhaps to carry as far as B., where some amateurs of the 'lazy root,' curious in such under-ground matters, are constant customers to Mr. Moore's 'pink eyes.' It is not, however, for love of that meritorious vegetable that the boys follow the potato-cart. One corner is parted off for apples, in hopes to tempt our thrifty housewives into the cheap extravagance of a pudding or a pie. Half a bushel of apples as yellow and mellow as quinces are deposited in one corner, and the young rogues have smelt the treasure out.

"Now to answer your kind inquiries. May—to begin at home!—May—many thanks for your recollection of my favourite!—May is as well as can be expected. She is literally and figuratively in the straw, being confined with one puppy—only one; and presenting in her fair person a very complete illustration of the old proverb respecting a hen with one chick. Never was such a fuss made about a little animal since greyhounds were greyhounds, and the tiny creature is as pert, petulant, and precocious a personage as any spoilt child that ever walked on four legs or two. I must confess, in vindication of May's taste, who never before showed such absolute devotion to her offspring, that the puppy has beauty enough for a whole litter. It is fawn-coloured with a dash of white, and promises to be ticked. Are you sportswoman sufficient to know that *ticked* means covered all over with white spots about the size of a pea? a great addition to greyhound beauty, and a sure sign of greyhound blood; a mark of caste, as they say in your country, and one the more to be relied on since it is a distinction of nature, and not of man.

"The shoemaker's pretty daughter is also 'as well as can be expected.' She is out of doors to-day for the first day since her confinement, and the delicate doll-like baby, which she is tossing as lightly and gracefully as if it were indeed a doll, and showing so proudly to her father's old crony, George Bridgwater, is her own. Her marriage confounded the calculations of all her neighbours, myself included: for she did not marry her handsome admirer Jem Tanner, who has wisely comforted himself

by choosing another flame,—nothing so sure a remedy for one love as rushing straight into another; nor Daniel Tubb, the dashing horsedealer, who used to flourish his gay steed up the street and down the street, ‘all for the love of pretty Bessie;’ neither did she marry Joseph Bacon, the snug young grocer, who walked every Sunday seven miles to sit next her at chapel, and sing hymns from the same book; nor her father’s smart apprentice, William Ford, although a present partnership in the business and a future succession would have made that marriage quite a *mariage de convenance*:—none of these, her known and recognised lovers, did the fair nymph of the shoe-shop marry, nor any of her thousand and one imputed swains. The happy man was one who had never been seen to speak to her in his life,—John Ford, brother to William, a tall, sinewy, comely blacksmith, who on six days of the week contrives so to become the anvil with his dingy leather cap and his stiff leather apron, his brawny naked arms and smoky face, that he seems native to the element, a very Vulcan; whilst on the seventh, he emerges like a butterfly from the chrysalis, and by dint of fine clothes and fair water, becomes quite the beau of the village, almost as handsome as Joel himself. Since he has been married to his pretty wife, every body remembers what a bright pattern of fraternal friendship John Ford used to be thought—how attentive to William! how constant in his visits! When William had a cold, the winter before the wedding, John used to come and ask after him every night. O that love! that love! What fibs it makes honest people tell!

“Lucy is gone—gone to superintend the samplers and spelling-books two counties off. Our blooming gipsy, Fanny, has also taken her departure. Her husband found that the gipsy blood could not be got over, especially as his pretty bride, besides her triple sins of gipsyism, of prettiness, and of being his bride, had the misfortune to catch, with a quickness which seemed intuitive, ways and manners suited to her new station, to behave as well as any of her neighbours, and better than most of them—an affront which the worthies of her society found unpardonable. So Thomas is gone to hold the same office at my lord’s estate in Devonshire; where, if they have the wit to keep their own counsels, the *mésalliance* will never be suspected, and Fanny will pass for a gamekeeper’s wife of the very first fashion.

“Lizzy! Alas! alas! you ask for Lizzy!—Do you remember how surely at the closed gate of the flower court, or through the open door of her father’s neat dwelling, we used to see the smiling rosy face, so full of life and glee; the square sturdy form, strong and active as a boy; the clear bright eyes, and red lips, and shining curly hair, giving such an assurance of health and strength? And do you not recollect how the bounding foot, and the gay young voice, and the merry musical laugh seemed to fill the

house and the court with her own quick and joyous spirit, as she darted about in her innocent play or her small housewifery, so lively and so vigorous, so lovely and so beloved? Do you not remember, too, how when we stopped to speak to her at that ever-open door, the whole ample kitchen was strewn with her little property, so that you used to liken it to a great baby-house? Here her kitten, there her doll; on one chair an old copy-book, on another a new sash; her work and needle-book and scissors and thimble put neatly away on her own little table; her straw hat ornamented with a tuft of feathery grasses, or a garland of woodbine, hanging carelessly against the wall; and pots of flowers of all sorts of the garden and the field, from the earliest bud to the latest blossom, ranged in the window, on the dresser, on the mantel shelf, wherever a jug could find room. Every thing spoke of Lizzy, her mother's comfort, her father's delight, the charm and life of the house; and every body loved to hear and see so fair a specimen of healthful and happy childhood. It did one's heart good to pass that open door. But the door is closed now, always closed; and the father, a hale and comely man, of middle age, is become all at once old, and bent, and broken; and the smiling placid mother looks as if she would never smile again. Nothing has been displaced in that sad and silent dwelling. The straw hat, with its faded garland, still hangs against the wall; the work is folded on the little table, with the small thimble upon it, as if just laid down; jars of withered flowers crowd the mantel and the window;—but the light hath departed; the living flower is gone; poor Lizzy is dead! Are you not sorry for poor, poor Lizzy?

“But this is too mournful a subject;—we must talk now of the Loddon, the beautiful Loddon—yes, it still flows: aye, and still overflows, according to its naughty custom. Only last winter it filled our meadows like a lake; rushed over our mill-dams like a cataract, and played such pranks with the old arch at York-pool, that people were fain to boat it betwixt here and Aberleigh; and the bridge having been denounced as dangerous in summer and impassable in winter, is like to cause a dispute between those two grand abstractions, the parish and the county, each of which wishes to turn the cost of rebuilding on the other. By their own account, they are two of the poorest personages in his Majesty's dominions; full of debt and difficulty, and exceedingly likely to go to law on the case, by way of amending their condition. The pretty naughty river! There it flows bright and clear, as when we walked by its banks to the old house at Aberleigh, looking as innocent and unconscious as if its victim, the bridge, had not been indicted—No—that's not the word!—*presented* at the Quarter Sessions; as if a worshipful committee were not sitting to inquire into its malversations; and an ancient and well-reputed

parish and a respectable midland county going together by the ears in consequence of its delinquency. There it flows clear and bright through the beautiful grounds of Aberleigh! The ruined mansion has been entirely pulled down; but the lime trees remain, and the magnificent poplars, and the gay wilderness of shrub and flower. The Fishing-house has been repaired by the delicate hand of taste, and it is a fairy scene still; a scene worthy of its owners and its neighbours, wanting nothing in my eyes but you to come and look at it.

"Come very soon, my dear Emily! Tell Colonel L., with our kindest remembrances, that we shall never love him quite so well as he deserves, until he brings you back to us. Come very soon! and in the mean while be sure you send me a full account of yourself and your 'whereabouts,' and do not fail to repay my brief notices of the simple scenery and humble denizens of our Village, by gorgeous stories of oriental wonders, of the Ganges, the Palmettos, the Elephants, and the Hindoos.

"And now, my dear friend, farewell!

"Ever most affectionately yours,"

&c. &c. &c.

GRACE NEVILLE.

Two or three winters ago, our little village had the good fortune to have its curiosity excited by the sudden appearance of a lovely and elegant young woman, as an inmate in the house of Mr. Martin, a respectable farmer in the place. The pleasure of talking over a new comer in a country village, which, much as I love country villages, does, I confess, occasionally labour under a stagnation of topics, must not be lightly estimated. In the present instance the enjoyment was greatly increased by the opportune moment at which it occurred, just before Christmas, so that conjecture was happily afloat in all the parties of that merry time, enlivened the tea-table, and gave zest and animation to the supper. There was, too, a slight shade of mystery, a difficulty in coming at the truth, which made the subject unusually poignant. Talk her

over as they might, nobody knew any thing certain of the incognita, or her story ; nobody could tell who she was, or whence she came. Mrs. Martin, to whom her neighbours were on a sudden most politely attentive in the way of calls and invitations, said nothing more than that Miss Neville was a young lady who had come to lodge at Kinlay-end ; and except at church, Miss Neville was invisible. Nobody could tell what to make of her.

Her beauty was, however, no questionable matter. All the parish agreed on that point. She was in deep mourning, which set off advantageously a tall and full, yet easy and elastic figure, in whose carriage the vigour and firmness of youth and health seemed blended with the elegance of education and good company. Youth and health were the principal characteristics of her countenance. There was health in her bright hazel eyes, with their rich dark eye-lashes ; health in the profusion of her glossy brown hair ; health in her pure and brilliant complexion ; health in her red lips, her white teeth, and the beautiful smile that displayed them ; health in her very dimple. Her manners, as well as they could be judged of in passing to and from church, leading one of the little Martins by the hand, and occasionally talking to him, seemed as graceful as her person, and as open as her countenance. All the village agreed that she was a lovely creature, and all the village wondered who she could be. It was a most animating puzzle.

There was, however, no mystery in the story of Grace Neville. She was the only child of an officer of rank, who fell in an early stage of the Peninsular war : her mother had survived him but a short time, and the little orphan had been reared in great tenderness and luxury by her maternal uncle, a kind, thoughtless, expensive man, speculating and sanguine, who, after exhausting a good fortune in vain attempts to realize a great one, sinking money successively in farming, in cotton-spinning, in paper-making, in a silk mill, and a mine, found

himself one fair morning actually ruined, and died (such things have happened) of a broken heart; leaving poor Grace at three-and-twenty, with the habits and education of an heiress, almost totally destitute.

The poor girl found, as usual, plenty of comforters and advisers. Some recommended her to sink the little fortune she possessed in right of her father in a school; some, to lay it by for old age, and go out as a governess; some hinted at the possibility of matrimony, advising, that at all events so fine a young woman should try her fortune by visiting about amongst her friends for a year or two, and favoured her with a husband-hunting invitation accordingly. But Grace was too independent and too proud for a governess; too sick of schemes for a school; and the hint matrimonial had effectually prevented her from accepting any, even the most unsuspected, invitation. Besides, she said, and perhaps she thought, that she was weary of the world; so she wrote to Mrs. Martin, once her uncle's housekeeper, now the substantial wife of a substantial farmer, and came down to lodge with her in our secluded village.

Poor Grace, what a change! It was mid-winter; snowy, foggy, sleety, wet. Kinlay-end, an old manor-house dilapidated into its present condition, stood with its windows half-closed; a huge vine covering its front, and ivy climbing up the sides to the roof—the very image of chilness and desolation. There was, indeed, one habitable wing, repaired and fitted up as an occasional sporting residence for the landlord; but those apartments were locked; and she lived like the rest of the family in the centre of the house, made up of great, low, dark rooms, with oaken panels, of long rambling passages, of interminable galleries, and broad, gusty staircases, up which you might drive a coach and six. Such was the prospect within doors; and without, mud! mud! mud! nothing but mud! Then the noises;—wind, in all its varieties, combined with bats, rats, cats, owls, pigs, cows, geese, ducks,

turkeys, chickens, and children, in all varieties also; for besides the regular inhabitants of the farm-yard,—biped and quadruped,—Mrs. Martin had within doors sundry coops of poultry, two pet lambs, and four boys from six years old downward, who were in some way or other exercising their voices all day long. Mrs. Martin too, she whilom so soft-spoken and demure, had now found her scolding tongue, and was, indeed, noted for that accomplishment all over the parish: the maid was saucy, and the farmer smoked.

Poor Grace Neville! what a trial! what a contrast! she tried to draw; tried to sing; tried to read; tried to work; and, above all, tried to be contented. But nothing would do. The vainest endeavour of all was the last. She was of the social, cheerful temperament to which sympathy is necessary; and having no one to whom she could say, how pleasant is solitude! began to find solitude the most tiresome thing in the world. Mr. and Mrs. Martin were very good sort of people in their way—scolding and smoking notwithstanding: but their way was so different from hers: and the children, whom she might have found some amusement in spoiling, were so spoilt already as to be utterly unbearable.

The only companionable person about the place was a slipshod urchin, significantly termed “the odd boy;” an extra and supplementary domestic, whose department it is to help all the others, out of doors and in; to do all that they leave undone; and to bear the blame of every thing that goes amiss. The personage in question, Dick Crosby by name, was a parish boy taken from the workhouse. He was, as nearly as could be guessed, (for nobody took the trouble to be certain about his age,) some where bordering on eleven; a long, lean, famished-looking boy, with a pale complexion, sharp thin features, and sunburnt hair. His dress was usually a hat without a crown; a tattered round frock; stockings that scarcely covered his ankles, and shoes that hung on his feet by the middle like clogs, down at heel,

and open at toe. Yet, underneath these rags, and through all his huffings and cuffings from master and mistress, carter and maid, the boy looked, and was, merry and contented ; was even a sort of a wag in his way ; sturdy and independent in his opinions, and constant in his attachments. He had a pet sheep-dog, (for amongst his numerous avocations he occasionally acted as under-shepherd,) a spectral, ghastly-looking animal, with a huge white head and neck, and a gaunt black body. — Mephistopheles might have put himself into such a shape. He had also a pet donkey, the raggedest brute upon the common, of whom he was part owner, and for whose better maintenance he was sometimes accused of such petty larceny as may be comprised in stealing what no other creature would eat, refuse hay, frosty turnips, decayed cabbage leaves, and thistles from the hedge.

These two faithful followers had long shared Dick Crosby's affections between them ; but from the first day of Miss Neville's appearance, the dog and the donkey found a rival. She happened to speak to him, and her look and voice won his heart at once and for ever. Never had high-born damsel in the days of chivalry so devoted a page. He was at her command by night or by day ; nay, "though she called another, Abra came." He would let nobody else clean her shoes, carry her clogs, or run her errands ; was always at hand to open the gates and chase away the cows when she walked ; forced upon her his own hoard of nuts ; and scoured the country to get her the wintry nosegays which the mildness of the season permitted, sweet-scented coltsfoot, china-roses, laurustinus, and stocks.

It was not in Grace's nature to receive such proofs of attachment without paying them in kind. Dick would hardly have been her choice for a pet, but being so honestly and artlessly chosen by him, she soon began to return the compliment, and showered on him marks of her favour and protection ; perhaps a little gratified, so mixed are human motives ! to find

that her patronage was still of consequence at Kinlay-end.—Halfpence and sixpences, apples and gingerbread, flowed into Dick's pocket; and his outward man underwent a thorough transformation. He cast his rags, and for the first time in his life put on an entire new suit of clothes. A proud boy was Dick that day. It is recorded that he passed a whole hour in alternate fits of looking in the glass and shouts of laughter. He laughed till he cried, for sheer happiness.

I have been thus particular in my account of Dick, because, in the first place, he was an old acquaintance of mine, a constant and promising attendant at the cricket-ground—his temperament being so mercurial, that even in his busiest days, when he seemed to have work enough upon his hands for ten boys, he would still make time for play; in the second, because I owe to him the great obligation of being known to his fair patroness. He had persuaded her, one dry afternoon, to go with him, and let him show her the dear cricket-ground; I happened to be passing the spot; and neither of us could ever exactly remember how he managed the matter, but the boy introduced us. He was an extraordinary master of the ceremonies, to be sure; but the introduction was most effectually performed, and to our mutual surprise and mutual pleasure we found ourselves acquainted. I have always thought it one of the highest compliments ever paid me, that Dick Crosby thought me worthy to be known to Miss Neville.

We were friends in five minutes. I found the promise of her lovely countenance amply redeemed by her character. She was frank, ardent, and spirited, with a cultivated mind, and a sweet temper; not to have loved her would have been impossible; and she, beside the natural pleasure of talking to one who could understand and appreciate her, was delighted to come to a house where the mistress did not scold, or the master smoke; where there were neither pigs, chickens, nor children.

As spring advanced and the roads improved, we saw each other almost every day; the soft skies and mild breezes of

implored her to give us the pleasure of her company during Sir John's stay: and so it was settled. He was expected the next evening, and she agreed to come to us some time in the forenoon.

The morning, however, wore away without bringing Miss Neville; dinner-time arrived and passed, and still we heard no tidings of her. At last, just as we were about to send to Kinlay-end for intelligence, Dick Crosby arrived on his donkey, with a verbal request that I would go to her there. Of course I complied; and as we proceeded on our way, I walking before, he riding behind, but neither of us much out of our usual pace, thanks to my rapid steps, and the grave funereal march of the donkey, I endeavoured to extract as much information as I could from my attendant, a person whom I generally found as communicative as heart could desire.

On this occasion he was most provokingly taciturn. I saw that there was no great calamity to dread, for the boy's whole face was evidently screwed up to conceal a grin, which, in spite of his efforts, broke out every moment in one or other of his features. He was bursting with glee, which for some unknown cause he did not choose to impart; and seemed to have put his tongue under a similar restraint to that which I have read of in some fairy tale, where an enchanter threatens a loquacious waiting-maid with striking her dumb, if, during a certain interval, she utters more than two words,—yes and no. Dick's vocabulary was equally limited. I asked him if Miss Neville was well? "Yes." If he knew what she wanted? "No." If Sir John Gower was arrived? "Yes." If Miss Neville meant to return with me? "No." At last, not able to contain himself any longer, he burst into a shout something between laughing and singing, and forcing the astonished donkey into a pace which, in that sober beast, might pass for a gallop, rode on before me, followed by the barking sheep-dog, to open the gate; whilst I, not a little curious, walked straight

through the house to Miss Neville's sitting-room. I paused a moment at the door, as by some strange counteraction of feeling one often does pause, when strongly interested; and in that moment I caught the sweet notes of *La ci darem*, sung by a superb manly voice, and accompanied by Grace's piano;—and instantly the truth flashed upon me, that the old Sir John Gower was gathered to his fathers, and that this was the heir and the lover come to woo and to wed. No wonder that Grace forgot her dinner engagement! No wonder that Dick Crosby grinned!

I was not mistaken. As soon as decorum would allow, Sir John carried off his beautiful bride, attended by her faithful adherent, the proudest and happiest of all odd boys! and the wedding was splendid enough to give a fresh impulse to village curiosity, and a new and lasting theme to our village gossips, who, first and last, could never comprehend Grace Neville.

A NEW-MARRIED COUPLE.

THERE is no pleasanter country sound than that of a peal of village bells, as they come vibrating through the air, giving token of marriage and merriment; nor ever was that pleasant sound more welcome than on this still, foggy, gloomy November morning, when all nature stood as if at pause; the large drops hanging on the thatch without falling; the sere leaves dangling on the trees; the birds mute and motionless on the boughs; turkeys, children, geese, and pigs unnaturally silent; the whole world quiet and melancholy as some of the enchanted places in the Arabian tales. That merry peal seemed at once to break the spell, and to awaken sound, and life, and motion. It had a peculiar welcome too, as stirring up one of the most

active passions in woman or in man, and rousing the rational part of creation from the torpor induced by the season and the weather at the thrilling touch of curiosity. Never was a completer puzzle. Nobody in our village had heard that a wedding was expected; no unaccustomed conveyance, from a coach to a wheel-barrow, had been observed passing up the vicarage lane; no banns had been published in church—no marriage of gentility, that is to say, of licence, talked of, or thought of; none of our village beaux had been seen, as village beaux are apt to be on such occasions, smirking and fidgetty; none of our village belles ashamed and shy. It was the prettiest puzzle that had occurred since Grace Neville's time; and, regardless of the weather, half the gossips of the street—in other words, half the inhabitants—gathered together in knots and clusters, to discuss flirtations and calculate possibilities.

Still the bells rang merrily on, and still the pleasant game of guessing continued, until the appearance of a well-known, but most unsuspected equipage, descending the hill from the church, and showing dimly through the fog the most unequivocal signs of bridal finery, supplied exactly the solution which all riddles ought to have, adding a grand climax of amazement to the previous suspense—the new-married couple being precisely the two most unlikely persons to commit matrimony in the whole neighbourhood; the only two whose names had never come in question during the discussion, both bride and bridegroom having been long considered the most confirmed and resolute old maid and old bachelor to be found in the country side.

Master Jacob Frost is an itinerant chapman, some where on the wrong side of sixty, who traverses the counties of Hants, Berks, and Oxon, with a noisy lumbering cart full of panniers, containing the heterogeneous commodities of fruit and fish, driving during the summer a regular and profitable barter between the coast on one side of us and the cherry country on

the other. We who live about midway between these extreme points of his peregrination, have the benefit of both kinds of merchandise going and coming; and there is not a man, woman, or child in the parish who does not know Master Frost's heavy cart and old grey mare half a mile off, as well as the stentorian cry of "Cherries, crabs, and salmon," sometimes pickled, and sometimes fresh, with which he makes the common and village re-echo; for, with an indefatigable perseverance, he cries his goods along the whole line of road, picking up customers where a man of less experience would despair, and so used to utter those sounds while marching beside his rumbling equipage, that it would not be at all surprising if he were to cry, "Cherries—salmon! salmon—cherries!" in his sleep. As to fatigue, that is entirely out of the question. Jacob is a man of iron; a tall, lean, gaunt figure, all bone and sinew, constantly clad in a tight brown jacket with breeches to match, long leather gaiters, and a leather cap; his face and hair tanned by constant exposure to the weather into a tint so nearly resembling his vestments that he looks all of a colour, like the statue ghost in *Don Giovanni*, although the hue be different from that renowned spectre—Jacob being a brown man. Perhaps Master Peter in *Don Quixote*, him of the ape and the shamoy doublet, were the apter comparison; or, with all reverence be it spoken, the ape himself. His visage is spare, and lean, and saturnine, enlivened by a slight cast in the dexter eye, and diversified by a partial loss of his teeth, all those on the left hand having been knocked out by a cricket ball, which, aided by the before-mentioned obliquity of vision, gives a peculiar one-sided expression to his physiognomy.

His tongue is well hung and oily, as suits his vocation. No better man at a bargain than Master Frost; he would persuade you that brill was turbot, and that black cherries were Maydukes; and yet, to be an itinerant vender of fish, the rogue hath a conscience. Try to bate him down, and he cheats you without scruple or mercy; but put him on his honour, and he

shall deal as fairly with you as the honestest man in Billingsgate. Neither doth he ever impose on children, with whom, in the matter of shrimps, perriwinkles, nuts, apples, and such boyish ware, he hath frequent traffic. He is liberal to the urchins; and I have sometimes been amused to see the Wat Tyler and Robin Hood kind of spirit with which he will fling to some wistful pennyless brat, the identical handful of cherries which, at the risk of his character and his customer, he hath cribbed from the scales, when weighing out a long-contested bargain with some clamorous housewife.

Also he is an approved judge and devoted lover of country sports; attends all pony races, donkey races, wrestling and cricket-matches, an amateur and arbiter of the very first water. At every revel or Maying within six miles of his beat, may Master Frost be seen, pretending to the world, and doubtless to his own conscience, (for of all lies those that one tells to that stern monitor are the most frequent,) that he is only there in the way of business; whilst in reality the cart and the old white mare, who perfectly understands the affair, may generally be found in happy quietude under some shady hedge; whilst a black sheep-dog, his constant and trusty follower, keeps guard over the panniers, Master Frost himself being seated in full state amidst the thickest of the throng, gravest of umpires, most impartial and learned of referees, utterly oblivious of cart and horse, panniers and sheep-dog. The veriest old woman that ever stood before a stall, or carried a fruit-basket, would beat our shrewd merchant out of the field on such a day as that; he hath not even time to bestow a dole on his usual pensioners the children. Unprofitable days to him, of a surety, so far as blameless pleasure can be called unprofitable; but it is worth something to a spectator to behold him in his glory, to see the earnest gravity, the solemn importance with which he will ponder the rival claims of two runners tied in sacks, or two grinners through a horse-collar.

Such were the habits, the business, and the amusements of

our old acquaintance Master Frost. Home he had none, nor family, save the old sheep-dog, and the old grey horse, who lived, like himself, on the road ; for it was his frequent boast, that he never entered a house, but ate, drank, and slept in the cart, his only dwelling-place. Who would ever have dreamt of Jacob's marrying ! And yet he it is that has just driven down the vicarage lane, seated in, not walking beside, that rumbling conveyance, the mare and the sheep-dog decked in white satin favours, already somewhat soiled, and wondering at their own finery ; himself adorned in a new suit of brown exactly of the old cut, adding by a smirk and a wink to the usual knowingness of his squinting visage. There he goes, a happy bridegroom, perceiving and enjoying the wonder that he has caused, and chuckling over it in low whispers to his fair bride, whose marriage seems to the puzzled villagers more astonishing still.

In one corner of an irregular and solitary green, communicating by intricate and seldom-trodden lanes with a long chain of commons, stands a thatched and white-washed cottage, whose little dove-cot windows, high chimneys, and honey-suckled porch, stand out picturesquely from a richly-wooded back-ground ; whilst a magnificent yew-tree and a clear bright pond on one side of the house, and a clump of horse-chesnuts over-hanging some low weather-stained outbuildings on the other, form altogether an assemblage of objects that would tempt the pencil of a landscape-painter, if ever painter could penetrate to a nook so utterly obscure. There is no road across the green, but a well-trodden footpath leads to the door of the dwelling, which the sign of a bell suspended from the yew-tree, and a board over the door announcing "Hester Hewit's home-brewed Beer," denote to be a small public-house.

Every body is surprised to see even the humblest village hostel in such a situation ; but the Bell is in reality a house of great resort, not only on account of Hester's home-brewed,

which is said to be the best ale in the county, but because, in point of fact, that apparently lonely and trackless common is the very high road of the drovers who come from different points of the west to the great mart, London. Seldom would that green be found without a flock of Welch sheep, foot-sore and weary, and yet tempted into grazing by the short fine grass dispersed over its surface, or a drove of gaunt Irish pigs sleeping in a corner, or a score of Devonshire cows straggling in all directions, picking the long grass from the surrounding ditches; whilst dog and man, shepherd and drover, might be seen basking in the sun before the porch, or stretched on the settles by the fire, according to the weather and the season.

The damsel who, assisted by an old Chelsea pensioner minus a leg, and followed by a little stunted red-haired parish-girl and a huge tabby cat, presided over this flourishing hostelry, was a spinster of some fifty years standing, with a reputation as upright as her person; a woman of slow speech and civil demeanour, neat, prim, precise, and orderly, stiff-starched and strait-laced as any maiden gentlewoman within a hundred miles. In her youth she must have been handsome; even now, abstract the exceeding primness, the pursed-up mouth, and the bolt-upright carriage, and Hester is far from uncomely, for her complexion is delicate, and her features are regular. And Hester, besides her comeliness and her good ale, is well to do in the world, has money in the stocks, some seventy pounds, a fortune in furniture, feather-beds, mattresses, tables, presses, and chairs of shining walnut-tree, to say nothing of a store of home-spun linen, and the united wardrobes of three maiden aunts. A wealthy damsel was Hester, and her suitors most probably have exceeded in number and boldness those of any lady in the land. Welch drovers, Scotch pedlars, shepherds from Salisbury Plain, and pig-drivers from Ireland—all these had she resisted for five-and-thirty years, determined to live and die “in single blessedness,” and “leave the world no copy.”

And she it is whom Jacob has won, from Scotchman and Irishman, pig-dealer and shepherd, she who now sits at his side in sober finery, a demure and blushing bride! Who would ever have thought of Hester's marrying! And when can the wooing have been? And how will they go on together? Will Master Frost still travel the country, or will he sink quietly into the landlord of the Bell? And was the match for love or for money? And what will become of the lame ostler? And how will Jacob's sheep-dog agree with Hester's cat? These, and a thousand such, are the questions of the village, whilst the bells ring merrily, and the new-married couple wend peaceably home.

OLIVE HATHAWAY.

ONE of the principal charms of this secluded village consists in the infinite variety of woody lanes, which wind along from farm to farm, and from field to field, intersecting each other with an intricacy so perplexing, and meandering with such a surprising round-about-ness, that one often seems turning one's back directly on the spot to which one is bound. For the most part those rough and narrow ways, devoted merely to agricultural purposes, are altogether unpeopled, although here and there a lone barn forms a characteristic termination to some winding lane, or a solitary habitation adds a fresh interest to the picture.

These lanes, with their rich hedge-rows, their slips of flowery greensward, and their profound feeling of security and retirement, have long been amongst my favourite walks; and Farley-lane is perhaps the prettiest and pleasantest of all, the shadiest in warm weather, and the most sheltered in cold, and appears doubly delightful by the transition from the exposed and open common from which it leads.

It is a deep narrow unfrequented road, by the side of a steep hill, winding between small enclosures of pasture land on one side, and the grounds of the Great House, with their picturesque paling and rich plantations, on the other ; the depth and undulations of the wild cart-track giving a singularly romantic and secluded air to the whole scene, whilst occasionally the ivied pollards and shining holly-bushes of the hedge-row mingle with the laurels, and cedars, and fine old firs of the park, forming, even in mid-winter, a green arch over head, and contrasting vividly with a little sparkling spring, which runs gurgling along by the side of the pathway. Towards the centre of the lane rises an irregular thatched cottage, with a spacious territory of garden and orchard, to which you ascend, first by a single plank thrown across the tiny rivulet, and then by two or three steps cut in the bank—an earthen staircase. This has been, as long as I can remember, the habitation of Rachel Strong, a laundress of the highest reputation in the hamlet, and of her young niece, Olive Hathaway. It is just possible that my liking for the latter of these personages may have somewhat biassed my opinion of the beauty of Farley-lane.

Olive Hathaway has always appeared to me a very interesting creature. Lame from her earliest childhood, and worse than an orphan,—her mother being dead, and her father, from mental infirmity, incapable of supplying her place,—she seemed prematurely devoted to care and suffering. Always gentle and placid, no one ever remembered to have seen Olive gay. Even that merriest of all hours, the noon-day play-time at school, passed gravely and sadly with the little lame girl. A book, if she could borrow one, if not, knitting or working for her good aunt Rachel, was her only pastime. She had no troop of play-fellows, no chosen companion,—joined in none of the innocent cabal or mischievous mirth of her comrades ; and yet every one liked Olive, even although cited by her mistress as a pattern of sempstress-ship and good conduct,—

even although held up as that odious thing a model,—no one could help loving poor Olive, so entirely did her sweetness and humility disarm envy and mollify scorn.

On leaving school she brought home the same good qualities, and found them attended by the same results. To Rachel Strong her assistance soon became invaluable. There was not such an ironer in the county. One could swear to the touch of her skilful fingers, whether in disentangling the delicate complexity of a point-lace cap, or in bringing out the bolder beauties of a cut-work collar ; one could swear to her handiwork, just as safely as a bank clerk may do to the calligraphy of a monied man on 'Change, or an amateur in art to the handling of a great master. There was no mistaking her touch. Things ironed by her looked as good as new, some said better ; and her aunt's trade thrived apace.

But Olive had a trade of her own. Besides her accomplishments as a laundress, she was an incomparable needle-woman ; could construct a shirt between sunrise and sunset ; had a genuine genius for mantua-making ; a real taste for millinery ; and was employed in half the houses round as a sempstress, at the rate of eight-pence a day,—devoting by far the greater part of her small earnings to the comforts of her father, a settled inhabitant of the village workhouse. A harmless and a willing creature was poor William Hathaway ; ay, and a useful one in his little way. For my part, I cannot think what they would have done without him at the workhouse, where he filled the several departments of man and maid of all-work, digging the garden, dressing the dinner, running on errands, and making the beds. Still less can I imagine how the boys could have dispensed with him ; the ten-year-old urchins, with whom he played at cricket every evening, and where the kind and simple old man, with his tall, lean person, his pale, withered face, and grizzled beard, was the fag and favourite of the party, the noisiest and merriest of the crew. A useful and a happy man was poor Wil-

ham Hathaway, albeit the proud and the worldly-wise held him in scorn ; happiest of all on the Sunday afternoons, when he came to dine with his daughter and her good aunt Rachel, and receive the pious dole, the hoarded halfpence or the "splendid shilling," which it was her delight to accumulate for his little pleasures, and which he, child-like in all his ways, spent like a child on cakes and gingerbread.

There was no fear of the source failing ; for, gentle, placid, grateful and humble, considerate beyond her years, and skilful far beyond her opportunities, every one liked to employ Olive Hathaway. The very sound of her crutch in the court, and her modest tap at the door, inspired a kindly, almost a tender feeling for the afflicted and defenceless young creature, whom patience and industry were floating so gently down the rough stream of life. Her person, when seated, was far from unpleasant, though shrunken and thin from delicacy of habit, and slightly leaning to one side from the constant use of the crutch. Her face was interesting from feature and expression, in spite of the dark and perfectly colourless complexion, which gave her the appearance of being much older than she really was. Her eyes, especially, were full of sweetness and power ; and her long straight hair, parted on the forehead and twisted into a thick knot behind, gave a statue-like grace to her head, that accorded ill with the coarse straw bonnet, and brown stuff gown, of which her dress was usually composed. There was, in truth, a something elegant and refined in her countenance ; and the taste that she displayed, even in the homeliest branches of her own homely art, fully sustained the impression produced by her appearance. If any of our pretty damsels wanted a particularly pretty gown, she had only to say to Olive, "Make it according to your own fancy ;" and she was sure to be arrayed, not only in the very best fashion, (for our little mantua-maker had an instinct which led her at once to the right model, and could distinguish at a glance between the elegance of a countess and the finery of her maid,)

but with the nicest attention to the becoming in colour and in form.

Her taste was equally just in all things. She would select, in a moment, the most beautiful flower in a garden, and the finest picture in a room : and going about, as she did, all over the village, hearing new songs and new stories from the young, and old tales and old ballads from the aged, it was remarkable that Olive, whose memory was singularly tenacious for what she liked, retained only the pretty lines or the striking incidents. For the bad or the indifferent she literally had no memory : they passed by her "as the idle wind that she regarded not." Her fondness for poetry, and the justness of taste which she displayed in it, exposed poor Olive to one serious inconvenience ; she was challenged as being a poetess herself ; and although she denied the accusation earnestly, blushing, even tearfully, and her accusers could bring neither living witness nor written document to support their assertion, yet so difficult is it to disprove that particular calumny, that in spite of her reiterated denial, the charge passes for true to this very hour. Habit, however, reconciles all things. People may become accustomed even to that sad nickname of an authoress. In process of time the imputed culprit ceased to be shocked at the sound, seemed to have made up her mind to bear the accusation, and even to find some amusement in its truth or its falsity. There was an arch and humorous consciousness in her eyes, on such occasions, that might be construed either way, and left it an even wager whether our little lame girl were a poetess or not.

Such was, and such is Olive Hathaway, the humble and gentle village mantua-maker ; and such she is likely to continue : for too refined for the youths of her own station, and too unpretty to attract those above her, it is very clear to me that my friend Olive will be an old maid. There are certain indications of character, too, which point to that as her des-

tiny : a particularity respecting her tools of office, which renders the misplacing a needle, the loss of a pin, or the unwinding half an inch of cotton, an evil of no small magnitude ; a fidgety exactness as to plaits and gathers ; a counting of threads and comparing of patterns, which our notable housewives, who must complain of something, grumble at as a waste of time ; a horror of shreds and litter, which distinguishes her from all other mantua-makers that ever sewed a seam ; and, lastly, a love of animals, which has procured for her the friendship and acquaintance of every four-footed creature in the neighbourhood. This is the most suspicious symptom of all. Not only is she followed and idolized by the poor old cur which Rachel Strong keeps to guard her house, and the still more aged donkey that carries home her linen, but every cat, dog, or bird, every variety of domestic pet that she finds in the different houses where she works, immediately following the strange instinct by which animals, as well as children, discover who likes them, makes up to and courts Olive Hathaway. For her doth Farmer Brookes's mastiff—surliest of watch dogs !—pretermitt his incessant bark ; for her, and for her only, will Dame Wheeler's tabby cease to spit and erect her bristles, and become, as nearly as a spiteful cat can become so, gentle and amiable ; even the magpie at the Rose, most accomplished and most capricious of all talking birds, will say, " Very well, ma'am," in answer to Olive's " How d'ye do ? " and whistle an accompaniment to her " God save the King," after having persevered in a dumb resentment for a whole afternoon. There's a magic about her placid smile and her sweet low voice, no sulkiness of bird or beast can resist their influence.

And Olive hath abundance of pets in return, from my greyhound Mayflower, downward ; and indeed takes the whole animal world under her protection, whether pets or no ; begs off condemned kittens, nurses sick ducklings, will give her last

penny to prevent an unlucky urchin from taking a bird's nest ; and is cheated and laughed at for her tender-heartedness, as is the way of the world in such cases.

Yes, Olive will certainly be an old maid, and a happy one, —content and humble, and cheerful and beloved ! What can woman desire more ?

A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

THE wedding of Jacob Frost and Hester Hewit took place on a Monday morning ; and, on the next day, (Tuesday,) as I was walking along the common—blown along would be the properer phrase, for it was a wind that impelled one onward like a steam-engine—what should I see but the well-known fish-cart sailing in the teeth of that raging gale, and Jacob and his old companions, the grey mare and the black sheep-dog, breasting, as well as they might, the fury of the tempest. As we neared, I caught occasional sounds of “herrings—oysters !—oysters—herrings !” although the words, being as it were blown away, came scatteringly and feebly on the ear ; and when we at last met, and he began in his old way to recommend, as was his wont, these oysters of a week old, (note, that the rogue was journeying coast-wise, outward-bound,) with a profusion of praises and asseverations which he never vented on them when fresh,—and when I also perceived that Jacob had donned his old garments, and that his company had doffed their bridal favours,—it became clear that our man of oysters did not intend to retire yet awhile to the landlordship of the Bell ; and it was soon equally certain that the fair bride, thus deserted in the very outset of the honeymoon, intended to maintain a full and undisputed dominion over her own territories—she herself, and her whole establishment—the lame

ostler, who still called her Mistress Hester—the red-haired charity girl, and the tabby cat, still remaining in full activity; whilst the very inscription of her maiden days, “Hester Hewit’s home-brewed,” still continued to figure above the door of that respectable hostelry. Two days after the wedding, that happy event seemed to be most comfortably forgotten by all the parties concerned—the only persons who took any note of the affair being precisely those who had nothing to do with the matter; that is to say, all the gossips of the neighbourhood, male and female—who did, it must be confessed, lift up their hands, and shake their heads, and bless themselves, and wonder what this world would come to.

On the succeeding Saturday, however, his regular day, Jacob re-appeared on the road, and, after a pretty long traffic in the village, took his way to the Bell; and, the next morning, the whole *cortège*, bride and bridegroom, lame ostler, red-haired lass, grey mare, and black sheep-dog, adorned exactly as on the preceding Monday, made their appearance at church; Jacob looking, as aforetime, very knowing—Hester, as usual, very demure. After the service there was a grand assemblage of Master Frost’s acquaintances; for, between his customers and his playmates, Jacob was on intimate terms with half the parish—and many jokes were prepared on his smuggled marriage and subsequent desertion;—but he of the brown jerkin evaded them all, by handing his fair lady into the cart, lifting the poor parish girl beside her, and even lending a friendly hoist to the lame ostler; after which he drove off, with a knowing nod, in total silence; being thereunto prompted partly by his wife’s entreaties, partly by a sound more powerful over his associations—an impatient neigh from the old grey mare, who, never having attended church before, had begun to weary of the length of the service, and to wonder on what new course of duty she and her master were entering.

By this despatch, our new-married couple certainly contrived to evade the main broadside of jokes prepared for their

reception ; but a few random jests, flung after them at a venture, hit notwithstanding ; and one amongst them, containing an insinuation that Jacob had stolen a match to avoid keeping the wedding, touched our bridegroom, a man of mettle in his way, on the very point of honour—the more especially as it proceeded from a bluff old bachelor of his own standing—honest George Bridgwater, of the Lea—at whose hospitable gate he had discussed many a jug of ale and knoll of bacon, whilst hearing and telling the news of the country side. George Bridgwater to suspect him of stinginess !—the thought was insupportable. Before he reached the Bell he had formed, and communicated to Hester, the spirited resolution of giving a splendid party in the Christmas week—a sort of wedding-feast or house-warming ; consisting of smoking and cards for the old, dancing and singing for the young, and eating and drinking for all ages ; and, in spite of Hester's decided disapprobation, invitations were given and preparations entered on forthwith.

Sooth to say, such are the sad contradictions of poor human nature, that Mrs. Frost's displeasure, albeit a bride in the honey-moon, not only entirely failed in persuading Master Frost to change his plan, but even seemed to render him more confirmed and resolute in his purpose. Hester was a thrifty housewife ; and although Jacob was apparently, after his fashion, a very gallant and affectionate husband, and although her interest had now become his—and of his own interest none had ever suspected him to be careless—yet he did certainly take a certain sly pleasure in making an attack at once on her hoards and her habits, and forcing her into a gaiety and an outlay which made the poor bride start back aghast.

The full extent of Hester's misfortune in this ball did not, however, come upon her at once. She had been accustomed to the speculating hospitality of the Christmas parties at the Rose, whose host was wont at tide times to give a supper to his customers, that is to say, to furnish the eatables thereof—

the leg of mutton and turnips, the fat goose and apple-sauce, and the huge plum-puddings—of which light viands that meal usually consisted, on an understanding that the aforesaid customers were to pay for the drinkables therewith consumed; and, from the length of the sittings, as well as the reports current on such occasions, Hester was pretty well assured that the expenditure had been most judicious, and that the leg of mutton and trimmings had been paid for over and over. She herself being, as she expressed it, “a lone woman, and apt to be put upon,” had never gone farther in these matters than a cup of hyson and muffins, and a glass of hot elder-wine, to some of her cronies in the neighbourhood; but, having considerable confidence both in the extent of Jacob’s connexions and their tippling propensities, as well as in that faculty of getting tipsy and making tipsy in Jacob himself, which she regarded “with one auspicious and one dropping eye,” as good and bad for her trade, she had at first no very great objection to try for once the experiment of a Christmas party; nor was she so much startled at the idea of a dance—dancing, as she observed, being a mighty provoker of thirst; neither did she very greatly object to her husband’s engaging old Timothy, the fiddler, to officiate for the evening, on condition of giving him as much ale as he chose to drink, although she perfectly well knew what that promise implied; Timothy’s example being valuable on such an occasion. But when the dreadful truth stared her in the face, that this entertainment was to be a *bonâ fide* treat—that not only the leg of mutton, the fat goose, and the plum-puddings, but the ale, wine, spirits, and tobacco were to come out of her coffers, then party, dancing, and fiddler became nuisances past endurance, the latter above all.

Old Timothy was a person of some note in our parish, known to every man, woman, and child in the place, of which, indeed, he was a native. He had been a soldier in his youth, and having had the good luck to receive a sabre wound on his

skull, had been discharged from the service as infirm of mind, and passed to his parish accordingly ; where he led a wandering pleasant sort of life, sometimes in one public-house, sometimes in another—tolerated, as Hester said, for his bad example, until he had run up a score that became intolerable, at which times he was turned out, with the workhouse to go to, for a *pis aller*, and a comfortable prospect that his good humour, his good fellowship, and his fiddle, would in process of time be missed and wanted, and that he might return to his old haunts and run up a fresh score. When half tipsy, which happened nearly every day in the week, and at all hours, he would ramble up and down the village, playing snatches of tunes at every corner, and collecting about him a never-failing audience of eight and ten-year-old urchins of either sex, amongst which small mob old Timothy, with his jokes, his songs, and his antics, was incredibly popular. Against Justice and Constable, treadmill and stocks, the sabre-cut was a protection, although I must candidly confess, that I do not think the crack in the crown ever made itself visible in his demeanour until a sufficient quantity of ale had gone down his throat, to account for any aberration of conduct, supposing the broadsword in question never to have approached his skull. That weapon served, however, as a most useful shield to our modern Timotheus, who, when detected in any outrageous fit of drunkenness, would immediately summon sufficient recollection to sigh and look pitiful, and put his poor, shaking, withered hand to the seam which the wound had left, with an air of appeal, which even I, with all my scepticism, felt to be irresistible.

In short, old Timothy was a privileged person ; and terrible sot though he were, he almost deserved to be so, for his good-humour, his contentedness, his constant festivity of temper, and his good-will towards every living thing—a good-will which met with its usual reward in being heartily and universally returned. Every body liked old Timothy, with

the solitary exception of the hostess of the Bell, who, having once had him as an inmate during three weeks, had been so scandalized by his disorderly habits, that, after having with some difficulty turned him out of her house, she had never admitted him into it again, having actually resorted to the expedient of buying off her intended customer, even when he presented himself pence in hand, by the gift of a pint of home-brewed at the door, rather than suffer him to effect a lodgment in her tap-room—a mode of dismissal so much to Timothy's taste, that his incursions had become more and more frequent, insomuch that "to get rid of the fiddler and other scape-graces, who were apt to put upon a lone woman," formed a main article in the catalogue of reasons assigned by Hester to herself and the world, for her marriage with Jacob Frost. Accordingly, the moment she heard that Timothy's irregularities and ill example were likely to prove altogether unprofitable, she revived her old objection to the poor fiddler's morals, rescinded her consent to his admission, and insisted so vehemently on his being unordered, that her astonished husband, fairly out-talked and out-scolded, was fain to purchase a quiet evening by a promise of obedience. Having carried this point, she forthwith, according to the example of all prudent wives, began an attack on another, and, having compassed the unordering of Timothy, began to bargain for uninviting her next neighbour, the widow Glen.

Mrs. Martha Glen kept a baker's and Chandler's shop in a wide lane, known by the name of the Broadway, and adorned with a noble avenue of oaks, terminating in the green whereon stood the Bell, a lane which, by dint of two or three cottages peeping out from amongst the trees, and two or three farm-houses, the smoke from whose chimneys sailed curlingly amongst them, might, in comparison with that lonely nook, pass for inhabited. Martha was a buxom widow, of about the same standing with Mistress Frost. She had had her share of this world's changes, being the happy relict of three several

spouses ; and was now a comely rosy dame, with a laughing eye and a merry tongue. Why Hester should hate Martha Glen was one of the puzzles of the parish. Hate her she did, with that venomous and deadly hatred that never comes to words ; and Martha repaid the obligation in kind, as much as a naturally genial and relenting temper would allow, although certainly the balance of aversion was much in favour of Mrs. Frost. An exceedingly smooth, genteel, and civil hatred it was on both sides ; such an one as would have done honour to a more polished society. They dealt with each other, curtsied to each other, sat in the same pew at church, and employed the same charwoman—which last accordance, by the way, may partly account for the long duration of discord between the parties. Betty Clarke, the help in question, being a sharp, shrewish, vixenish woman, with a positive taste for quarrels, who regularly reported every cool innuendo uttered by the slow and soft-spoken Mrs. Frost, and every hot retort elicited from the rash and hasty Martha, and contrived to infuse her own spirit into each. With such an auxiliary on either side, there could be no great wonder at the continuance of this animosity ; how it began was still undecided. There were, indeed, rumours of an early rivalry between the fair dames for the heart of a certain gay shepherd, the first husband of Martha ; other reports assigned as a reason the unlucky tricks of Tom Higgs, the only son of Mrs. Glen by her penultimate spouse, and the greatest Pickle within twenty miles ; a third party had, since the marriage, discovered the jealousy of Jacob to be the proximate cause, Martha Glen having been long his constant customer, dealing with him in all sorts of fishery and fruitery for herself and her shop, from red-herrings to golden pippins ; whilst a fourth party, still more scandalous, placed the jealousy, to which they also attributed the aversion, to the score of a young and strapping Scotch pedlar, Sandy Frazer by name, who travelled the country with muslins and cottons, and for whom certain malicious gossips

asserted both ladies to entertain a lurking *penchant*, and whose insensibility towards the maiden was said to have been the real origin of her match with Jacob Frost, whose proffer she had accepted out of spite. For my own part, I disbelieve all and each of these stories, and hold it very hard that an innocent woman cannot entertain a little harmless aversion towards her next neighbour without being called to account for so natural a feeling. It seems that Jacob thought so too—for on Hester's conditioning that Mrs. Glen should be excluded from the party, he just gave himself a wink and a nod, twisted his mouth a little more on one side than usual, and assented without a word; and with the same facility did he relinquish the bough of misletoe, which he had purposed to suspend from the bacon-rack—the ancient misletoe bough, on passing under which our village lads are apt to snatch a kiss from the village maidens: a ceremony which offended Hester's nicety, and which Jacob promised to abrogate; and, pacified by these concessions, the bride promised to make due preparation for the ball, whilst the bridegroom departed on his usual expedition to the coast.

Of the unrest of that week of bustling preparation, words can give but a faint image—Oh, the scourings, the cleanings, the sandings, the dustings, the scoldings of that disastrous week! The lame ostler and the red-haired parish girl were worked off their feet—"even Sunday shone no Sabbath-day to them"—for then did the lame ostler trudge eight miles to the church of a neighbouring parish, to procure the attendance of a celebrated bassoon player to officiate in lieu of Timothy; whilst the poor little maid was sent nearly as far to the next town, in quest of an itinerant show-woman, of whom report had spoken at the Bell, to beat the tambourine. The show-woman proved undiscoverable; but the bassoon player having promised to come, and to bring with him a clarionet, Mrs. Frost was at ease as to her music; and having provided more victuals than the whole village could have discussed at a

sitting, and having moreover adorned her house with berried holly, china-roses, and chrysanthemums, after the most tasteful manner, began to enter into the spirit of the thing, and to wish for the return of her husband, to admire and to praise.

Late on the great day Jacob arrived, his cart laden with marine stores for his share of the festival. Never had our goodly village witnessed such a display of oysters, muscles, perriwinkles, and cockles, to say nothing of apples and nuts, and two little kegs, snugly covered up, which looked exceedingly as if they had cheated the revenue, a packet of green tea, which had something of the same air, and a new silk gown, of a flaming salmon-colour, straight from Paris, which he insisted on Hester's retiring to assume, whilst he remained to arrange the table and receive the company, who, it being now about four o'clock P. M.—our good rustics can never have enough of a good thing—were beginning to assemble for the ball.

The afternoon was fair and cold, and dry and frosty, and Matthews, Bridgwaters, Whites, and Joneses, in short the whole farmerage and shopkeepery of the place, with a goodly proportion of wives and daughters, came pouring in apace. Jacob received them with much gallantry, uncloaking and unbonneting the ladies, assisted by his two staring and awkward auxiliaries, welcoming their husbands and fathers, and apologizing, as best he might, for the absence of his help-mate; who, "perplexed in the extreme" by her new finery, which happening to button down the back, she was fain to put on hind side before, did not make her appearance till the greater part of the company had arrived, and the music had struck up a country dance. An evil moment, alas! did poor Hester choose for her entry! for the first sound that met her ear was Timothy's fiddle, forming a strange trio with the bassoon and the clarionet: and the first persons whom she saw were Tom Higgs cracking walnuts at the chimney-side, and Sandy Frazer saluting the widow Glen under the misletoe.

How she survived such sights and sounds does appear wonderful—but survive them she did—for at three o'clock, A. M., when our reporter left the party, she was engaged in a social game at cards, which, by the description, seems to have been long whist, with the identical widow Glen, Sandy Frazer, and William Ford, and had actually won fivepence-halfpenny of Martha's money; the young folks were still dancing gaily, to the sound of Timothy's fiddle, which fiddle had the good quality of going on almost as well drunk as sober, and it was now playing solo, the clarionet being *hors-de-combat* and the bassoon under the table. Tom Higga, after showing off more tricks than a monkey, amongst the rest sewing the whole card-party together by the skirts, to the probable damage of Mrs. Frost's gay gown, had returned to his old post by the fire, and his old amusement of cracking walnuts, with the shells of which he was pelting the little parish girl, who sat fast asleep on the other side; and Jacob Frost in all his glory, sat in a cloud of tobacco smoke, roaring out catches with his old friend George Bridgwater, and half a dozen other "drowthy cronies," whilst "aye the ale was growing better," and the Christmas party went merrily on.

A QUIET GENTLEWOMAN.

My present reminiscence will hardly be of the tenderest sort, since I am about to commemorate one of the oldest bores of my acquaintance, one of the few grievances of my happy youth. The person in question, my worthy friend Mrs. Aubrey, was a respectable widow lady, whose daughter having married a relation of my father's, just at the time that she herself came to settle in the town near which we resided, constituted exactly that mixture of juxta-position and family

connexion, which must of necessity lead to a certain degree of intimacy, whatever discrepancies might exist in the habits and characters of the parties. We were intimate accordingly; dined with her once a year, drank tea with her occasionally, and called on her every time that the carriage went into W—; visits which she returned in the lump, by a sojourn of at least a month every summer with us at the Lodge. How my dear mother endured this last infliction I cannot imagine: I most undutifully contrived to evade it, by so timing an annual visit, which I was accustomed to pay, as to leave home on the day before her arrival and return to it the day after her departure, quite content with the share of *ennui* which the morning calls and the tea-drinkings (evils which generally fell to my lot) entailed upon me.

This grievance was the more grievous, inasmuch as it was one of those calamities which do not admit the great solace and consolation to be derived from complaint. Mrs. Aubrey, although the most tiresome person under the sun,—without an idea, without a word, a mere inert mass of matter,—was yet in the fullest sense of those “words of fear” a good sort of woman, well-born, well-bred, well-jointured, and well-conducted, a perfectly unexceptionable acquaintance. There were some who even envied me my intimacy with this human automaton, this most extraordinary specimen of still-life.

In her youth she had been accounted pretty, a fair, sleepy, blue-eyed beauty, languid and languishing, and was much followed by that class of admirers, who like a woman the better the nearer she approaches to a picture in demeanour as well as in looks.* She had, however, with the disparity that so often

* One of her lovers, not quite so devoted to quietude in the fair sex, adventured on a gentle admonition. He presented to her a superb copy of the “Castle of Indolence,” and requested her to read it. A few days after, he inquired of her sister if his fair mistress had condescended to look into the book. “No,” was the answer; “No, but I read it to her as she lay on the sofa.” The gentleman was a man of sense. He shrugged his shoulders, and six months after married this identical sister.

attends upon matrimony, fallen to the lot of a most vivacious and mercurial country squire, a thorough-paced foxhunter, whose pranks (some of them more daring than lawful) had obtained for him the cognomen of "mad Aubrey;" and having had the good fortune to lose this husband in the third year of their nuptials, she had never undergone the fatigue and trouble of marrying another.

When I became acquainted with her, she was a sleek, round, elderly lady, with very small features, very light eyes, invisible eye-brows, and a flaxen wig. She sat all day long on a sofa by the fireside, with her feet canted up on an ottoman; the ingenious machine called a pair of lazy tongs on one side of her, and a small table on the other, provided with every thing that she was likely or unlikely to want for the whole morning. The bell-pull was also within reach: but she had an aversion to ringing the bell, a process which involved the subsequent exertion of speaking to the servant when he appeared. The dumb-waiter was her favourite attendant. There she sat, sofa-ridden; so immoveable, that if the fire had been fierce enough to roast her into a fever, as once happened to some exquisitely silly king of Spain, I do think that she would have followed his example, and have staid quiet, not from etiquette, but from sheer laziness. She was not however unemployed; your very idle people have generally some play-work, the more tedious and useless the better; hers was knitting with indefatigable perseverance little diamonds in white cotton, destined at some future period to dovetail into a counterpane. The diamonds were striped, and were intended to be sewed together so artistically, that the stripes should intersect each other, one row running perpendicularly and the next horizontally, so as to form a regular pattern; a bit of white mosaic, a tessellated quilt.

At this work I regularly found Mrs. Aubrey when compelled to the "sad civility" of a morning call, in which her unlucky visitor had all the trouble of keeping up the convers-

ation. What a trouble it was ! just like playing at battledore by one's self, or singing a duet with one's own single voice : not the lightest tap would mine hostess give to the shuttlecock ;—not a note would she contribute to the concert. She might almost as well have been born dumb, and but for a few stray noes and yeses, and once in a quarter of an hour some savourless inquiry, she might certainly have passed for such. She would not even talk of the weather. Then her way of listening ! One would have wagered that she was deaf. News was thrown away upon her ; scandal did not rouse her ; the edge of wit fell upon her dulness like the sword of Richard on the pillow of Saladin. There never was such a woman ! Her drawing-room, too, lacked all the artificial aids of conversation ; no books, no newspapers, no children, no dogs ; nothing but Mrs. Aubrey and her knitted squares, and an old Persian cat, who lay stretched on the hearth-rug, as impassible as his mistress ; a cat so iniquitously quiet that he would neither play, nor purr, nor scratch, nor give any token of existence beyond mere breathing. I don't think, if a mouse had come across him, that he would have condescended to notice it.

Such was the state of things within the room : without, it was nearly as bad. Her house, one of the best in W., was situate in a new street standing slant-ways to one of the entrances of the town ; a street of great gentility, but of little resort, and, above all, no thoroughfare. So that after going to the window to look for a subject, and seeing nothing but the dead-wall of an opposite chapel, we were driven back to the sofa to expatiate for the twentieth time on Selim's beauty, and admire once again the eternal knitting. Oh the horror of those morning visits.

One very great aggravation of the calamity was the positive certainty of finding Mrs. Aubrey at home. The gentle satisfaction with which one takes a ticket from one's card-case, after hearing the welcome answer "my mistress is just walked out !" never befell one at Mrs. Aubrey's. She never took a

walk, although she did sometimes, moved by the earnest advice of her apothecary, get so far as to talk of doing so. The weather was always too hot, or too cold ; or it had been raining ; or it looked likely to rain ; or the streets were dirty ; or the roads were dusty ; or the sun shone ; or the sun did not shine (either reason would serve—her laziness was much indebted to that bright luminary) ; or somebody had called ; or somebody might call ; or (and this I believe was the excuse that she most commonly made to herself) she had not time to walk on account of her knitting, she wanted to get on with that.

The only time that I ever saw her equipped in out-of-door costume was one unexceptionable morning in April, when the sun, the wind, the sky, and the earth, were all as bright, and sweet, and balmy, as if they had put themselves in order on purpose to receive an unaccustomed visitor. I met her just as she was issuing slowly from the parlour, and enchanted at my good fortune, entreated, with equal truth and politeness, that I might not keep her within. She entered into no contest of civility ; but returned with far more than her usual alacrity into the parlour, rung the bell for her maid, sat down on her dear sofa, and was forthwith unclogged, unshawled, and unbonneted, seemingly as much rejoiced at the respite as a school-boy reprieved from the rod, or a thief from the gallows. I never saw such an expression of relief, of escape from a great evil, on any human countenance. It would have been quite barbarous to have pressed her to take her intended walk : and, moreover, it would have been altogether useless. She had satisfied her conscience with the attempt, and was now set in to her beloved knitting in contented obstinacy. The whole world would not have moved her from that sofa.

She did however exchange evening visits, in a quiet melancholy way, with two or three ladies, her near neighbours, to whose houses she was carried in the stately ease of a sedan-chair :—for in those days *flies* were not ; at which times the

knitting was replaced by cassino. Those visits were, if not altogether so silent, yet very nearly as dull as the inflictions of the morning; her companions (if companions they may be called) being for the most part persons of her own calibre, although somewhat more loquacious. They had a beau or two belonging to this West Street coterie, which even beaux failed to enliven; a powdered physician, rather pompous; a bald curate, very prim; and a simpering semi-bald apothecary, who brushed a few straggling locks up to the top of his crown and tried to make them pass for a head of hair; he was by far the most gallant man of the party, and amongst them might almost be reckoned amusing.

So passed the two first years of Mrs. Aubrey's residence in W. The third brought her a guest whose presence was felt as a relief by every body, perhaps the only woman who could have kept her company constantly, to the equal satisfaction of both parties.

Miss Dale was the daughter of a deceased officer, with a small independence, who boarded in the winter in Charter-House Square, and passed her summer in visiting her friends. She was what is called a genteel little woman, of an age that seemed to vary with the light and the hour; oldish in the morning, in the evening almost young, always very smartly dressed, very good-humoured, and very lively. Her spirits were really astonishing; how she could not only appear gay but be gay in such an atmosphere of dulness, still puzzles me to think of. There was no French blood either, which might have accounted for the phenomenon; her paternal grandfather having been in his time high sheriff for the county of Notts; a genuine English country gentleman—and her mother, strange to relate, a renegado quakeress, expelled from the Society of Friends for the misdemeanour of espousing an officer. Some sympathy might exist there; no doubt the daughter would have been as ready to escape from a community of lawn caps and drab gowns as the mother. Her love of pink ribands was

certainly hereditary ; and, however derived, her temper was as thoroughly *couleur de rose* as her cap trimming. Through the long quiet mornings, the formal visits, the slow dull dinners, she preserved one unvarying gaiety, carried the innovation of smiles amongst the insipid gravities of the cassino table ; and actually struck up an intermitting flirtation with the apothecary—which I, in my ignorance, expected to find issue in a marriage, and was simple enough to be astonished, when one morning the gentleman brought home a cherry-cheeked bride, almost young enough to be his grand-daughter.

The loss of a lover, however, had no effect on Miss Dale's spirits. I have never known any thing more enviable than the buoyancy of her temper. She was not by any means too clever for her company, or too well-informed ; never shocked their prejudices, or startled their ignorance, nor ever indeed said any thing remarkable at all. On the contrary, I think that her talk, if recollected, would seem, although always amiable and inoffensive, somewhat vapid and savourless ; but her prattle was so effervescent, so *up*—the cheerfulness was so natural, so real—that contrary to the effect of most sprightly conversation, it was quite contagious, and even exhilarated, as much as any thing could exhilarate, the sober circle amongst whom she moved.

She had another powerful attraction in her extraordinary pliancy of mind. No sooner had the stage-coach conveyed her safely to the door of the large house in West Street, than all her Charter-House Square associations vanished from her mind ; it seemed as if she had left locked up in her drawers with her winter apparel every idea not West Streetian. She was as if she had lived in W. all her days : had been born there, and there meant to die. She even divested herself of the allowable London pride, which looks down so scornfully on country dignitaries, admired the Mayor, revered the corporation, preferred the powdered physician to Sir Henry Halford, and extolled the bald curate as the most eminent

preacher in England, Mr. Harness and Mr. Benson notwithstanding.

So worthy a denizen of West Street was of course hailed there with great delight. Mrs. Aubrey, always in her silent way glad to receive her friends, went so far as to testify some pleasure at the sight of Miss Dale; and the Persian cat, going beyond his mistress in the activity of his welcome, fairly sprang into her lap. The visits grew longer and longer, more and more frequent, and at last, on some diminution of income, ended in her coming regularly to live with Mrs. Aubrey, partly as humble companion, partly as friend: a most desirable increase to that tranquil establishment, which was soon after enlarged by the accession of a far more important visitor.

Besides her daughter, whom she would have probably forgotten if our inquiries had not occasionally reminded her that such a person was in existence, Mrs. Aubrey had a son in India, who did certainly slip her memory, except just twice a year when letters arrived from Bengal. She herself never wrote to either of her children, nor did I ever hear her mention Mr. Aubrey till one day, when she announced, with rather more animation than common, that poor William had returned to England on account of ill health, and that she expected him in W. that evening.

In the course of a few days my father called on the invalid, and we became acquainted. He was an elegant-looking man, in the prime of life, high in the Company's service, and already possessed of considerable wealth. His arrival excited a great sensation in W. and the neighbourhood. It was the eve of a general election, and some speculating aldermen did him the favour of making an attack upon his purse, by fixing on him as a candidate to oppose the popular member; whilst certain equally speculating mammas meditated a more covert attack on his heart, through the charms of their unmarried daughters. Both parties were fated to disappointment; he

waived off either sort of address with equal disdain, and had the good luck to get quit of his popularity almost as rapidly as he had acquired it.

Sooth to say, a man with more eminent qualifications for rendering himself disagreeable than were possessed by Mr. Aubrey seldom made his appearance in civilized society. He had nothing in common with his good-humoured mother but her hatred of trouble and of talking; and having the misfortune to be very clever and very proud, tall and stately in his person, with a head habitually thrown back, bright black scornful eyes and a cold disdainful smile, did contrive to gratify his own self-love by looking down upon other people more affrontingly than the self-love of the said people could possibly endure. Nobody knew any harm of Mr. Aubrey, but nobody could abide him; so that it being perfectly clear that he would have nothing to say either to the Borough or the young ladies, the attentions offered to him by town and country suddenly ceased; it being to this hour a moot point whether he or the neighbourhood first sent the other to Coventry.

He, on his part, right glad, as it seemed, to be rid of their officious civility, remained quietly in his mother's house, very fanciful and a little ill; talking between whiles of an intended visit to Leamington or Cheltenham, but as easily diverted from a measure so unsuited to his habits as an abode at a public place, as Mrs. Aubrey herself had been from a morning walk. All the summer he lingered at W., and all the autumn; the winter found him still there; and at last, he declared that he had made up his mind to relinquish India altogether, and to purchase an estate in England.

By this time our little world had become accustomed to his haughty manner, which had the advantage of being equally ungracious to every one; (people will put up with a great deal in good company; it is the insolence which selects its object that gives indelible offence;) and a few who had access to him on

business, such as lawyers and physicians, speaking in high terms of his intelligence and information, whilst tradesmen of all classes were won by his liberality, Mr. Aubrey was in some danger of undergoing a second attack of popularity, when he completely destroyed his rising reputation by a measure the most unexpected and astonishing—he married Miss Dale, to the inexpressible affront of every young lady of fashion in the neighbourhood. He actually married Miss Dale, and all W. spoke of her as the artfullest woman that ever wore a wedding-ring, and pitied poor Mrs. Aubrey, whose humble companion had thus insnared her unwary son. Nothing was heard but sympathy for her imputed sufferings on this melancholy occasion, mixed with abuse of the unfortunate bride, whose extraordinary luck in making so brilliant an alliance had caused her popularity to vanish as speedily as her husband's.

With these reports tingling in my ears, I went to pay the wedding visit to Mrs. Aubrey, senior, delighted at the event myself, both as securing much of good to Miss Dale, who was just the person to enjoy the blessings of her lot, and pass lightly over the evil; and as a most proper and fitting conclusion to the airs of her spouse; but a little doubtful how my old acquaintance might take the matter, especially as it involved the loss of her new daughter's company, and must of necessity cause her some little trouble. I was never more puzzled in my life, whether to assume a visage of condolence or of congratulation; and the certainty that her countenance would afford no indication either of joy or sorrow, enhanced my perplexity. I was, however, immediately relieved by the nature of her employment; she was sitting surrounded by sempstresses, at a table covered with knitting and wedding-cake, whilst her maidens were putting together, under her inspection, that labour of her life the tessellated quilt: the only wedding present by which she could sufficiently compliment her son, or adequately convey her sense of the merits

and excellence of his fair bride! Her pleasure in this union was so great that she actually talked about it, presented the cake herself, and poured out with her own hands the wine to be drunk to the health of the new-married couple.

Mr. Aubrey had purchased a place in Devonshire, and six months after his mother quitted W. to go and live near him. But, poor dear lady, she did not live there—she died. The unsettling, and the journey, and the settling again, terrible operations to one who seemed, like the Turkish women, to have roots to her feet, fairly killed her. She was as unfit to move as a two-year old cabbage, and drooped, and withered, and dropped down dead of the transplantation. Peace to her memory! the benediction that she would assuredly have preferred to all others. Peace to her ashes!

THE TWO VALENTINES.

VALENTINE's Day is one of great stir and emotion in our little village. In large towns—especially in London—the wicked habit of quizzing has entirely destroyed the romance and illusion of that tender anniversary. But we in the country are, for the most part, uninfected by “over-wiseness,” or “over-niceness,” (to borrow two of Sir Walter Raleigh's quaint but expressive phrases,) and are content to keep the gracious festival of love-making and *billets-doux*, as simply and confidingly as our ancestors of old. I do not mean to say that every one of our youths and maidens pair on that day, like the “goldfinch, bullfinch, greenfinch, and all the finches of the grove.”—Heaven forbid!—Nor that the spirit of fun hath so utterly evaporated from us, that we have no display of innocent trick or harmless raillery on that licensed morn:—all that I contend for is, that, in our parts, some truth may

be found lurking amidst the fictions of those annual rhymes—that many a village beau hath so broken the ice of courtship—and that many a village belle hath felt her heart throb, as she glanced at the emblematic scroll, and tried to guess the sender, in spite of the assumed carelessness, the saucy head-tossings, and the pretty poutings with which she attempted to veil her real interest. In short, there is something like sincerity amongst us, even in a Valentine;—as witness the number of wooings begun on the fourteenth of February, and finished in that usual end of courtships and comedies—a wedding—before Whitsuntide. Our little lame clerk, who keeps a sort of catalogue *raisonnée* of marriages, as a companion to the parish-register, computes those that issue from the bursting Valentine-bag of our postman, at not less than three and a half per annum—that is to say, seven between two years.

But—besides the matches which spring, directly or indirectly, from the *billets* commonly called Valentines—there is another superstition connected with the day, which has no small influence on the destinies of our country maidens. They hold, that the first man whom they espy in the morning—provided that such man be neither of kin to them, nor married, nor an inmate of the same house—is to pass for their Valentine during the day; and, perhaps, (for this is the secret clause which makes the observation important,) to prove their husband for life. It is strange how much faith they put in this kind of *sortes virgilianæ*—this turning over the living leaf of destiny; and how much pains they will take to cheat the fates, and see the man they like best first in spite of the stars! One damsel, for instance, will go a quarter of a mile about, in the course of her ordinary avocations, in order to avoid a youth whom she does not fancy; another shall sit within doors, with her eyes shut, half the morning, until she hears the expected voice of the favourite swain;—whilst, on their part, our country lads take care to place themselves each

in the way of his chosen she ; and a pretty lass would think herself overlooked, if she had not three or four standing round her door, or sauntering beneath her window, before sunrise.

Now, one of the prettiest girls in our parish is, undoubtedly, Sally North. Pretty is hardly the proper phrase—Sally is a magnificent girl ;—tall, far above the common height of woman, and large in proportion—but formed with the exactest symmetry, and distinguished by the firm, erect, and vigorous carriage, and the light, elastic step, peculiar to those who are early accustomed to walk under burthens. Sally's father is an eminent baker—the most celebrated personage in our village ; besides supplying half the next town with genuine country bread, which he carries thither himself in his huge tilted cart, he hath struck into other arts of the oven, and furnishes all the breakfast-tables, within five miles, with genuine London rolls. No family of gentility can possibly get through the first meal without them. The rolls, to be sure, are—just like other rolls—very good, and nothing more ; but some whim of a great man, or caprice of a fine lady, has put them in fashion ; and so Sally walks round the parish every morning, with her great basket, piled to the very brim, poised on her pretty head—now lending it the light support of one slender hand, and now of another ; the dancing black eyes, and the bright blushing smile, that flash from under her burthen, as well as the perfect ease and grace with which she trips along, entirely taking away all painful impression of drudgery or toil. She is quite a figure for a painter, is Sally North—and the gipsy knows it. There is a gay, good-humoured consciousness of her power and her beauty, as she passes on her morning round, carolling as merrily as the lark over her head, that makes no small part of her charm. The lass is clever, too—sharp and shrewd in her dealings—and, although sufficiently civil and respectful to her superiors, and never actually wanting in decorum, is said to dismiss the

compliments of some of her beaux with a repartee generally *brusque*, and frequently poignant.

Of beaux—between the lacqueys of the houses that she takes in her circuit, and the wayfarers whom she picks up on the road—Sally hath more than a court beauty ; and two of them—Mr. Thompson, my lord's gentleman, a man of substance and gravity, not much turned of fifty ; and Daniel Tubb, one of Sir John's gardeners, a strapping red-haired youth, as comely and merry as herself—were severally recommended, by the old and the young, as fitting matches for the pretty mistress of the rolls. But Sally silenced Mr. Thompson's fine speeches by a very stout, sturdy, steady "No ;" and even inflicted a similar sentence (although so mildly, that Daniel did not quite despair) on his young rival ; for Sally, who was seventeen last Candlemas day, had been engaged these three years !

The love affair had begun at the Free School at Aberleigh ; and the object of it, by name Stephen Long, was the son of a little farmer in the neighbourhood, and about the same age with his fair mistress. There the resemblance ceased ; for Stephen had been as incomparably the shortest and ugliest boy in the school, as Sally was the tallest and prettiest girl—being, indeed, of that stunted and large-headed appearance which betokens a dwarf, and is usually accompanied by features as unpleasant in their expression as they are grotesque in their form. But then he was the head boy : and being held up by the master as a miracle of reading, writing, and ciphering, was a personage of no small importance at Aberleigh ; and Sally being, with all her cleverness, something of a dunce, owed to Stephen much obligation for assistance in the school business. He arranged, cast up, and set in order on the slate, the few straggling figures which poor Sally called her sum—painted over, and reduced to something like form, the misshapen and disjointed letters in her copy-book—learnt all her lessons himself, and tried most ineffectually to teach

them to her—and, finally, covered her unconquerable want of memory by the loudest and boldest prompting ever heard out of a theatre. Many a rap of the knuckles have Sally North's blunders cost Stephen Long, and vainly did the master admonish him to hold his tongue. Prompt he would—although so incorrigibly stupid was his fair mistress, that, even when the words were put into her mouth, she stumbled at repeating them; and Stephen's officious kindness commonly ended in their being punished in company—a consummation, for his share of which the boy was gallant enough to rejoice. She was fully sensible of this flattering devotion, and repaid it, as far as lay in her power, by taking him under her protection at playtimes, in return for the services which he rendered her in school; and, becoming more and more bound to him by a series of mutual good offices, finished by vindicating his ugliness, denying his pedantry, and, when twitted with his dwarfishness, boldly predicting that he would grow. They walked together, talked together, laughed, romped, and quarrelled—in short, it was a decided attachment; and when our village Romeo was taken as an apprentice by a cousin of his mother's—a respectable hosier in Cheapside—it is on record, that his Juliet—the lightest-hearted personage in the neighbourhood—cried for an hour, and moped for a day. All the school stood amazed at her constancy!

Stephen, on his side, bore the test of absence like a knight of Amadis his day. Never was *preux* chevalier so devoted to the lady of his love. Every letter home contained some tender message or fond inquiry; and although the messages became gradually less and less intelligible, as the small pedantry of the country schoolboy ripened into the full-blown affectation of the London apprentice, still Sally was far from quarrelling with a love message, on so small a ground as not understanding it; whilst, however mysterious his words might seem, his presents spoke his affection in a more homely and convincing language. Of such tokens there was no lack. The

very first packet that he sent home, consisting of worsted mittens for his old grandmother, a pair of cotton hose for his sister, and a nightcap for his father, contained also a pair of scarlet garters for Sally ; which attention was followed up at every opportunity by pincushions, ribands, thimbles, needle-cases, and as great a variety of female ware as that with which Autolycous's basket was furnished. No wonder that Sally, in spite of occasional flirtations with Daniel Tubb, continued tolerably constant ; especially as one of Stephen's sisters, who had been at service in London, affirmed that he was so much improved, as to be one of the smartest beaux in all Cheapside.

So affairs continued until this identical Valentine's Day. Last spring, a written Valentine, exceedingly choice in its decorations, had made its appearance at Master North's ; rather out of date, it must be owned, since, being enclosed in a packet, to save postage, and sent by an opportunity, as the country phrase goes, it had been detained, either by accident or waggery, till the first of April ; but this was none of Stephen's fault ; there was the Valentine in the newest London taste, consisting of a raised group of roses and heart's-ease, executed on a kind of paper cut-work, which, on being lifted up, turned into a cage, enclosing a dove ;—tender emblem !—with all the rapidity of a change in a pantomime. There the Valentine was ;—equally known for Stephen's, by the savour of the verses and the flourish of the signature—the finest specimen of poetry and penmanship, as my friend the schoolmaster triumphantly asserted, that had ever been seen in Aberleigh. “ The force of *writing* could no further go ;” so, this year, our “ good apprentice ” determined to come himself to be her personal Valentine, and to renew, if not complete, their early engagement.

On this determination being announced to Sally, it occasioned no small perturbation in that fair damsel, equally alarmed at the mental accomplishments and the personal de-

fects of her constant swain. In fact, her feeling towards Stephen had been almost as ideal and unsubstantial as the shadow of a rainbow. She liked to think of him when she had nothing better to do; or to talk of him, when she had nothing better to say; or to be puzzled by his verses, or laughed at for his homage; but as a real substantial Valentine, a present wooer, a future husband, and he so ugly, and a poet too—Oh dear! she was frightened to think of it! This impression first broke forth to his sister—who communicated the news of his intended arrival—in a variety of questions, as to Stephen's height, and size, and shape, and complexion; especially as compared with Daniel Tubb's! and was afterwards displayed to that rustic adorer himself; not by words, indeed, but by the encouraging silence and saucy smile with which she listened to his account of the debarkation of his cockney rival, from the top of the B—— stage. "He's tinier than ever," quoth Daniel, "and the smartest dandy that ever was seen. I shall be your Valentine, after all, Sally," pursued her swain; "for I could hide him with the shadow of my fist."

This was Valentine's-eve. Valentine's-morn saw Sally eyeing the two rivals, through a peep-hole in her little check curtain, as they stood side-by-side on the green, watching for the first glimpse of their divinity. Never was seen such a contrast. Stephen, whose original square dwarfishness had fined down into a miniature dandy—sallow, strutting, and all over small—the very Tom Thumb of apprentices!—Daniel, taller, bigger, ruddier, and heartier than ever—the actual Goliath of country lads! Never was such a contrast seen. At length, Sally, laughing, blushing, and bridling, sallied forth from the cottage—her huge roll basket, but not as usual filled with rolls, carried, not on her head, but in her hands. "I'm your Valentine, Sally! am I not?" exclaimed Daniel Tubb, darting towards her, "you saw me first; I know you saw me first," continued the ardent lover, proceeding to elaim the salute usual on

such occasions. "Pshaw ! nonsense ! let me alone then, Daniel, can't you ?" was the reply of his mistress, advancing to Stephen, who perhaps dazzled by the beauty, perhaps astounded by the height of the fair giantess, remained motionless and speechless on the other side of the road. "Would you like a ride in my basket this fine morning, Mr. Stephen ?" said the saucy lass, emptying all his gifts, garters, pincushions, ribands, and Valentines from their huge reservoir, and depositing it on the ground at his feet. "Don't be afraid ; I'll be bound to carry you as easily as the little Italian boy carries his tray of images. He's not half the weight of the rolls—is he, Daniel ?" pursued the unmerciful beauty. "For my part, I think he has grown shorter.—Come, do step in !" And, with the word, the triumphant Daniel lifted up the discomfited beau, placed him safely in the basket, and hoisted the burthen on Sally's head—to the unspeakable diversion of that saucy maiden, and the complete cure of Master Stephen's love.—No need, after this, to declare which of the two rivals is Sally North's Valentine. I think, with the little clerk, that they will be married at Whitsuntide, if not before.

A COUNTRY APOTHECARY.

ONE of the most important personages in a small country town is the apothecary. He takes rank next after the rector and the attorney, and before the curate ; and could be much less easily dispensed with than either of those worthies, not merely as holding "fate and physic" in his hand, but as the general, and as it were official, associate, adviser, comforter, and friend, of all ranks and all ages, of high and low, rich and poor, sick and well. I am no despiser of dignities ; but twenty emperors shall be less intensely missed in their wide dominions

than such a man as my friend John Hallett in his own small sphere.

The spot which was favoured with the residence of this excellent person was the small town of Hazelby, in Dorsetshire ; a pretty little place, where every thing seems at a stand still. It was originally built in the shape of the letter T ; a long, broad market-place (still so called, although the market be gone) serving for the perpendicular stem, traversed by a straight, narrow, horizontal street, to answer for the top line. Not one addition has occurred to interrupt this architectural regularity since ; fifty years ago, a rich London tradesman built, at the west end of the horizontal street, a wide-fronted single house, with two low wings, iron pallisades before, and a fish-pond opposite, which still goes by the name of New Place, and is balanced, at the east end of the street, by an erection of nearly the same date, a large, square, dingy mansion enclosed within high walls, inhabited by three maiden sisters, and called, probably by way of nickname, the Nunnery. New Place being on the left of the road, and the Nunnery on the right, the T has now something the air of the Italic capital T, turned up at one end and down on the other. The latest improvements are the bow-window in the market-place, commanding the pavement both ways, which the late brewer, Andrews, threw out in his snug parlour some twenty years back, and where he used to sit smoking, with the sash up, in summer afternoons, enjoying himself, good man ; and the great room at the Swan, originally built by the speculative publican, Joseph Allwright, for an assembly-room. That speculation did not answer. The assembly, in spite of canvassing and patronage, and the active exertions of all the young ladies in the neighbourhood, dwindled away and died at the end of two winters : then it became a club-room for the hunt ; but the hunt quarrelled with Joseph's cookery : then a market-room for the farmers ; but the farmers (it was in the high-price time) quarrelled with Joseph's wine : then it was converted into the

magistrates' room—the bench; but the bench and the market went away together, and there was an end of justicing: then Joseph tried the novel attraction (to borrow a theatrical phrase) of a billiard-table; but, alas! that novelty succeeded as ill as if it had been theatrical; there were not customers enough to pay the marker: at last, it has merged finally in that unconscious receptacle of pleasure and pain, a post-office; although Hazelby has so little to do with traffic of any sort—even the traffic of correspondence—that a saucy mail-coach will often carry on its small bag, and as often forget to call for the London bag in return.

In short, Hazelby is an insignificant place;—my readers will look for it in vain in the map of Dorsetshire;—it is omitted, poor dear town!—left out by the map-maker with as little remorse as a dropped letter!—and it is also an old-fashioned place. It has not even a cheap shop for female gear. Every thing in the one store which it boasts, kept by Martha Deane, linen-draper and haberdasher, is dear and good, as things were wont to be. You may actually get there thread made of flax, from the gouty, uneven, clumsy, shiny fabric, yclept whited-brown, to the delicate commodity of Lisle, used for darning muslin. I think I was never more astonished than when, on asking, from the mere force of habit, for thread, I was presented, instead of the pretty lattice-wound balls or snowy reels of cotton, with which that demand is usually answered, with a whole drawerful of skeins, peeping from their blue papers—such skeins as in my youth a thrifty maiden would draw into the nicely-stitched compartments of that silken repository, a housewife, or fold into a congeries of graduated thread-papers, “fine by degrees, and beautifully less.” The very literature of Hazelby is doled out at the pastry-cook’s, in a little one-windowed shop, kept by Matthew Wise. Tarts occupy one end of the counter, and reviews the other; whilst the shelves are parcelled out between books, and dolls, and gingerbread. It is a question, by which of his

trades poor Matthew gains least ; he is so shabby, so thread-bare, and so starved.

Such a town would hardly have known what to do with a highly-informed and educated surgeon, such as one now generally sees in that most liberal profession. My friend, John Hallett, suited it exactly. His predecessor, Mr. Simon Shuter, had been a small, wrinkled, spare old gentleman, with a short cough and a thin voice, who always seemed as if he needed an apothecary himself. He wore generally a full suit of drab, a flaxen wig of the sort called a Bob Jerom, and a very tight muslin stock ; a costume which he had adopted in his younger days in imitation of the most eminent physician of the next city, and continued to the time of his death. Perhaps the cough might have been originally an imitation also, ingrafted on the system by habit. It had a most unsatisfactory sound, and seemed more like a trick than a real effort of nature. His talk was civil, prosy, and fidgety, much addicted to small scandal, and that kind of news which passes under the denomination of tittle-tattle. He was sure to tell one half of the town where the other drank tea, and recollected the blanch-manges and jellies on a supper-table, or described a new gown, with as much science and unction as if he had been used to make jellies and wear gowns in his own person. Certain professional peculiarities might have favoured the supposition. His mode of practice was exactly that popularly attributed to old women. He delighted in innocent remedies—manna, magnesia, and camphor julep ; never put on a blister in his life ; and would sooner, from pure complaisance, let a patient die, than administer an unpalatable prescription.

So qualified, to say nothing of his gifts in tea-drinking, casino, and quadrille, (whist was too many for him,) his popularity could not be questioned. When he expired all Hazelby mourned. The lamentation was general. The women of every degree (to borrow a phrase from that great phrase-monger, Horace Walpole) “cried quarts ;” and the procession

to the church-yard—that very church-yard to which he had himself followed so many of his patients—was now attended by all of them that remained alive.

It was felt that the successor of Mr. Simon Shuter would have many difficulties to encounter. My friend, John Hallett, “came, and saw, and overcame.” John was what is usually called a rough diamond. Imagine a short, clumsy, stout-built figure, almost as broad as it is long, crowned by a bullet head, covered with shaggy brown hair, sticking out in every direction; the face round and solid, with a complexion originally fair, but dyed one red by exposure to all sorts of weather; open good-humoured eyes of a greenish cast, his admirers called them hazel; a wide mouth, full of large white teeth; a cocked-up nose, and a double chin; bearing altogether a strong resemblance to a print which I once saw hanging up in an alehouse parlour, of “the celebrated divine,” (to use the identical words of the legend,) “Doctor Martin Luther.”

The condition of a country apothecary being peculiarly liable to the inclemency of the season, John’s dress was generally such as might bid defiance to wind or rain, or snow or hail. If any thing, he wrapt up most in the summer, having a theory that people were never so apt to take cold as in hot weather. He usually wore a bear-skin great coat, a silk handkerchief over his cravat, top boots on those sturdy pillars his legs, a huge pair of overalls, and a hat which, from the day in which it first came into his possession to that in which it was thrown aside, never knew the comfort of being freed from its oilskin—never was allowed to display the glossy freshness of its sable youth. Poor dear hat! how its vanity (if hats have vanity) must have suffered! For certain its owner had none, unless a lurking pride in his own bluntness and bluntness may be termed such. He piqued himself on being a plain downright Englishman, and on a voice and address pretty much like his apparel, rough, strong, and warm, and fit for all weathers. A heartier person never lived.

In his profession he was eminently skilful, bold, confident, and successful. The neighbouring physicians liked to come after Mr. Hallett; they were sure to find nothing to undo. And blunt and abrupt as was his general manner, he was kind and gentle in a sick-room; only nervous disorders, the pet diseases of Mr. Simon Shuter, he could not abide. He made short work with them; frightened them away, as one does by children when they have the hiccough; or if the malady were pertinacious and would not go, he fairly turned off the patient. Once or twice, indeed, on such occasions, the patient got the start, and turned him off; Mrs. Emery, for instance, the lady's maid at New Place, most delicate and mincing of waiting-gentlewomen, motioned him from her presence; and Miss Deane, daughter of Martha Deane, haberdasher, who, after completing her education at a boarding-school, kept a closet full of millinery in a little den behind her mamma's shop, and was by many degrees the finest lady in Hazelby, was so provoked at being told by him that nothing ailed her, that, to prove her weakly condition, she pushed him by main force out of doors.

With these exceptions Mr. Hallett was the delight of the whole town, as well as of all the farm-houses within six miles round. He just suited the rich yeomanry, cured their diseases, and partook of their feasts; was constant at christenings, and a man of prime importance at weddings. A country merry-making was nothing without "the Doctor." He was "the very prince of good fellows;" had a touch of epicurism, which, without causing any distaste of his own homely fare, made dainties acceptable when they fell in his way; was a most absolute carver; prided himself upon a sauce of his own invention, for fish and game—"Hazelby sauce" he called it; and was universally admitted to be the best compounder of a bowl of punch in the country.

Besides these rare convivial accomplishments, his gay and jovial temper rendered him the life of the table. There was

no resisting his droll faces, his droll stories, his jokes, his tricks, or his laugh—the most contagious cachinnation that ever was heard. Nothing in the shape of fun came amiss to him. He would join in a catch or roar out a solo, which might be heard a mile off; would play at hunt the slipper, or blindman's-buff; was a great man in a country dance, and upon very extraordinary occasions would treat the company to a certain remarkable hornpipe, which put the walls in danger of tumbling about their ears, and belonged to him as exclusively as the Hazelby sauce. It was a sort of parody on a pas seul which he had once seen at the Opera-house, in which his face, his figure, his costume, his rich humour, and his strange, awkward, unexpected activity told amazingly. "The force of frolic could no farther go," than "the Doctor's hornpipe." It was the climax of jollity.

But the chief scene of Mr. Hallett's gaiety lay out of doors, in a very beautiful spot, called the Down, a sloping upland, about a mile from Hazelby; a side view of which, with its gardens and orchards, its pretty church peeping from amongst lime and yew trees, and the fine piece of water, called Hazelby Pond, it commanded. The Down itself was an extensive tract of land covered with the finest verdure, backed by a range of hills, and surrounded by coppice-woods, large patches of which were scattered over the turf, like so many islands on an emerald sea. Nothing could be more beautiful or more impenetrable than these thickets; they were principally composed of birch, holly, hawthorn, and maple, woven together by garlands of woodbine, interwreathed and intertwined by bramble and brier, till even the sheep, although the bits of their snowy fleece left on the bushes bore witness to the attempt, could make no way in the leafy mass. Here and there a huge oak or beech rose towering above the rich under-wood; and all around, as far as the eye could pierce, the borders of this natural shrubbery were studded with a countless variety of woodland flowers. When the old thorns were in

blossom, or when they were succeeded by the fragrant woodbine and the delicate brier-rose, it was like a garden, if it were possible to fancy any garden so peopled with birds.*

The only human habitation on this charming spot was the cottage of the shepherd, old Thomas Tolfrey, who, with his grand-daughter, Jemima, a light pretty maiden of fourteen, tended the flocks on the Down; and the rustic carols of this little lass and the tinkling of the sheep-bells were usually the only sounds that mingled with the sweet songs of the feathered tribes. On May-days and holidays, however, the thickets resounded with other notes of glee than those of the linnet and the wood-lark. Fairs, revels, May-games, and cricket-matches—all were holden on the Down; and there would John Hallett sit, in his glory, universal umpire and referee of cricketer, wrestler, or back-sword player, the happiest and greatest man in the field. Little Jemima never failed to bring her grandfather's arm chair, and place it under the old oak for the good Doctor; I question whether John would have exchanged his throne for that of the King of England.

On these occasions he certainly would have been the better for that convenience, which he piqued himself on not needing—a partner. Generally speaking, he really, as he used to boast, did the business of three men; but when a sickly season and a Maying happened to come together, I cannot help suspecting that the patients had the worst of it. Perhaps,

* A circumstance of some curiosity in natural history occurred for several successive years on this Down. There was constantly in one of the thickets a blackbird's nest, of which the young were distinguished by a striking peculiarity. The old birds (probably the same pair) were of the usual sable colour, but the plumage of their progeny was milk-white, as white as a swan, without a single discoloured feather. They were always taken, and sold at high prices to the curious in such freaks of nature. The late bishop of Winchester had a pair of them for a long time in the aviary at Farnham Castle; they were hardy, and the male was a fine song-bird; but all attempts to breed from them failed. They died, "and left the world no copy."

however, a partner might not have suited him. He was sturdy and independent to the verge of a fault, and would not have brooked being called to account or brought to a reckoning by any man under the sun ; still less would he endure the thought of that more important and durable co-partnery—marriage. He was a most determined bachelor ; and so afraid of being mistaken for a wooer, or incurring the reputation of a gay deceiver, that he was as uncivil as his good-nature would permit to every unwedded female from sixteen to sixty, and had nearly fallen into some scrapes on that account with the spinsters of the town, accustomed to the soft silkiness of Mr. Simon Shuter ; but they got used to it—it was the man's way ; and there was an indirect flattery in his fear of their charms which the maiden ladies, especially the elder ones, found very mollifying ; so he was forgiven.

In his shop and his household he had no need either of partner or of wife ; the one was excellently managed by an old rheumatic journeyman, slow in speech and of vinegar aspect, who had been a pedagogue in his youth, and now used to limp about with his Livy in his pocket, and growl as he compounded the medicines over the bad latinity of the prescriptions ; the other was equally well conducted by an equally ancient housekeeper and a cherry-cheeked niece, the orphan daughter of his only sister, who kept every thing within doors in the bright and shining order in which he delighted. John Hallett, notwithstanding the roughness of his aspect, was rather knick-knacky in his tastes ; a great patron of small inventions, such as the improved ne plus ultra cork-screw, and the latest patent snuffers. He also trifled with horticulture, dabbled in tulips, was a connoisseur in pinks, and had gained a prize for polyanthuses. The garden was under the especial care of his pretty niece, Miss Margaret, a grateful, warm-hearted girl, who thought she never could do enough to please her good uncle, and prove her sense of his kindness. He was indeed as fond of her as if he had been her father, and as kind.

Perhaps there was nothing very extraordinary in his goodness to the gentle and cheerful little girl, who kept his walks so trim and his parlour so neat, who always met him with a smile, and who (last and strongest tie to a generous mind) was wholly dependent on him—had no friend on earth but himself. There was nothing very uncommon in that. But John Hallett was kind to every one, even where the sturdy old English prejudices, which he cherished as virtues, might seem most likely to counteract his gentler feelings. One instance of his benevolence and of his delicacy shall conclude this sketch.

Several years ago an old French emigré came to reside at Hazelby. He lodged at Matthew Wise's, of whose twofold shop for cakes and novels I have before made honourable mention, in the low three-cornered room, with a closet behind it, which Matthew had the impudence to call his first floor. Little was known of him but that he was a thin, pale, foreign-looking gentleman, who shrugged his shoulders in speaking, took a great deal of snuff, and made a remarkably low bow. The few persons with whom he had any communication spoke with amusement of his bad English, and with admiration of his good humour; and it soon appeared, from a written paper placed in a conspicuous part of Matthew's shop, that he was an Abbé, and that he would do himself the honour of teaching French to any of the nobility or gentry of Hazelby who might think fit to employ him. Pupils dropt in rather slowly. The curate's daughters, and the attorney's son, and Miss Deane the milliner—but she found the language difficult, and left off, asserting that M. l'Abbé's snuff made her nervous. At last poor M. l'Abbé fell ill himself, really ill, dangerously ill, and Matthew Wise went in all haste to summon Mr. Hallett. Now Mr. Hallett had such an aversion to a Frenchman, in general, as a cat has to a dog; and was wont to erect himself into an attitude of defiance and wrath at the mere sight of the object of his antipathy. He hated and despised the whole nation, abhorred the language, and "would as lief," he

assured Matthew, "have been called in to a toad." He went, however, grew interested in the case, which was difficult and complicated; exerted all his skill, and in about a month accomplished a cure.

By this time he had also become interested in his patient, whose piety, meekness, and resignation had won upon him in an extraordinary degree. The disease was gone, but a languor and lowness remained, which Mr. Hallett soon traced to a less curable disorder, poverty: the thought of the debt to himself evidently weighed on the poor Abbé's spirits, and our good apothecary at last determined to learn French purely to liquidate his own long bill. It was the drollest thing in the world to see this pupil of fifty, whose habits were so entirely unfitted for a learner, conning his task; or to hear him conjugating the verb *avoir*, or blundering through the first phrases of the easy dialogues. He was a most unpromising scholar, shuffled the syllables together in a manner that would seem incredible, and stumbled at every step of the pronunciation, against which his English tongue rebelled again. Every now and then he solaced himself with a fluent volley of execrations in his own language, which the Abbé understood well enough to return, after rather a politer fashion, in French. It was a most amusing scene. But the motive! the generous, noble motive! M. l'Abbé, after a few lessons, detected this delicate artifice, and, touched almost to tears, insisted on dismissing his pupil, who, on his side, declared that nothing should induce him to abandon his studies. At last they came to a compromise. The cherry-cheeked Margaret took her uncle's post as a learner, which she filled in a manner much more satisfactory; and the good old Frenchman not only allowed Mr. Hallett to administer gratis to his ailments, but partook of his Sunday dinner as long as he lived.

WHEAT-HOEING.

A MORNING RAMBLE.

MAY the 3rd.—Cold bright weather. All within doors, sunny and chilly; all without, windy and dusty. It is quite tantalizing to see that brilliant sun careering through so beautiful a sky, and to feel little more warmth from his presence than one does from that of his fair but cold sister, the moon. Even the sky, beautiful as it is, has the look of that one sometimes sees in a very bright moonlight night—deeply, intensely blue, with white fleecy clouds driven vigorously along by a strong breeze—now veiling and now exposing the dazzling luminary around whom they sail. A beautiful sky! and, in spite of its coldness, a beautiful world! The effect of this backward spring has been to arrest the early flowers, to which heat is the great enemy; whilst the leaves and the later flowers have, nevertheless, ventured to peep out slowly and cautiously in sunny places—exhibiting, in the copses and hedge-rows, a pleasant mixture of March and May. And we, poor chilly mortals, must follow, as nearly as we can, the wise example of the May-blossoms, by avoiding bleak paths and open commons, and creeping up the sheltered road to the vicarage—the pleasant sheltered road, where the western sun steals in between two rows of bright green elms, and the east wind is fenced off by the range of woody hills which rise abruptly before us, forming so striking a boundary to the picture.

How pretty this lane is, with its tall elms, just drest in their young leaves, bordering the sunny path, or sweeping in a semi-circle behind the clear pools, and the white cottages that are scattered along the way. You shall seldom see a cottage hereabout without an accompanying pond, all alive with geese and ducks, at the end of the little garden. Ah! here is Dame

Simmons making a most original use of her piece of water, standing on the bank that divides it from her garden, and most ingeniously watering her onion-bed with a new mop—now a dip, and now a twirl ! Really, I give her credit for the invention. It is as good an imitation of a shower as one should wish to see on a summer-day. A squirt is nothing to it !

And here is another break to the tall line of elms—the gate that leads into Farmer Thorpe's great enclosures. Eight, ten, fourteen people in this large field, wheat-hoeing. The couple nearest the gate, who keep aloof from all the rest, and are hoeing this furrow so completely in concert, step by step, and stroke for stroke, are Jem Tanner and Mabel Green. There is not a handsomer pair in the field or in the village. Jem, with his bright complexion, his curling hair, his clear blue eye, and his trim figure—set off to great advantage by his short jacket and trowsers and new straw hat ; Mabel, with her little stuff gown, and her white handkerchief and apron—defining so exactly her light and flexible shape—and her black eyes flashing from under a deep bonnet lined with pink, whose reflection gives to her bright dark countenance and dimpled cheeks a glow innocently artificial, which was the only charm that they wanted.

Jem and Mabel are, beyond all doubt, the handsomest couple in the field, and I am much mistaken if each have not a vivid sense of the charms of the other. Their mutual admiration was clear enough in their work ; but it speaks still more plainly in their idleness. Not a stroke have they done for these five minutes ; Jem, propped on his hoe, and leaning across the furrow, whispering soft nonsense ; Mabel, blushing and smiling—now making believe to turn away—now listening, and looking up with a sweeter smile than ever, and a blush that makes her bonnet-lining pale. Ah, Mabel ! Mabel ! Now they are going to work again ;—no !—after three or four strokes, the hoes have somehow become entangled, and, with-

out either advancing a step nearer the other, they are playing with these rustic implements as pretty a game at romps—showing off as nice a piece of rural flirtation—as ever was exhibited since wheat was hoed.

Ah, Mabel! Mabel! beware of Farmer Thorpe! He'll see, at a glance, that little will his corn profit by such labours. Beware, too, Jem Tanner!—for Mabel is, in some sort, an heiress; being the real niece and adopted daughter of our little lame clerk, who, although he looks such a tattered ragga-muffin, that the very grave-diggers are ashamed of him, is well to pass in the world—keeps a scrub pony,—indeed he can hardly walk up the aisle—hath a share in the County fire-office—and money in the funds. Mabel will be an heiress, despite the tatterdemallion costume of her honoured uncle, which I think he wears out of coquetry, that the remarks which might otherwise fall on his miserable person—full as misshapen as that of any Hunchback recorded in the Arabian Tales—may find a less offensive vent on his raiment. Certain such a figure hath seldom been beheld out of church or in. Yet will Mabel, nevertheless, be a fortune; and, therefore, she must intermarry with another fortune, according to the rule made and provided in such cases; and the little clerk hath already looked her out a spouse, about his own standing—a widower in the next parish, with four children and a squint. Poor Jem Tanner! Nothing will that smart person or that pleasant speech avail with the little clerk;—never will he officiate at your marriage to his niece;—“amen” would “stick in his throat.” Poor things! in what a happy oblivion of the world and its cares, Farmer Thorpe and the wheat-hoeing, the squinting shop-keeper and the little clerk, are they laughing and talking at this moment! Poor things! poor things!

Well, I must pursue my walk. How beautiful a mixture of flowers and leaves is in the high bank under this north hedge—quite an illustration of the blended seasons of which I

spoke. An old irregular hedge-row is always beautiful, especially in the spring-time, when the grass, and mosses, and flowering weeds mingle best with the bushes and creeping plants that overhang them. But this bank is, most especially, various and lovely. Shall we try to analyze it? First, the clinging white-veined ivy, which crawls up the slope in every direction, the master-piece of that rich mosaic; then the brown leaves and the lilac blossoms of its fragrant namesake, the ground-ivy, which grows here so profusely; then the late-lingering primrose; then the delicate wood-sorrel; then the regular pink stars of the cranesbill, with its beautiful leaves; then the golden oxlip and the cowslip, "cinque-spotted;" then the blue pansy, and the enamelled wild hyacinth; then the bright foliage of the brier-rose, which comes trailing its green wreaths amongst the flowers; then the bramble and the woodbine, creeping round the foot of a pollard oak, with its brown folded leaves; then a verdant mass—the blackthorn, with its lingering blossoms—the hawthorn, with its swelling buds—the bushy maple—the long stems of the hazel—and between them, hanging like a golden plume over the bank, a splendid tuft of the blossomed broom; then, towering high above all, the tall and leafy elms. And this is but a faint picture of this hedge, on the meadowy side of which sheep are bleating, and where, every here and there, a young lamb is thrusting its pretty head between the trees.

Who is this approaching? Farmer Thorpe? Yes, of a certainty, it is that substantial yeoman, sallying forth from his substantial farm-house, which peeps out from between two huge walnut-trees on the other side of the road, with intent to survey his labourers in the wheat-field. Farmer Thorpe is a stout, square, sturdy personage of fifty, or thereabout, with a hard weather-beaten countenance, of that peculiar vermilion, all over alike, into which the action of the sun and wind sometimes tans a fair complexion; sharp shrewd features, and a keen grey eye. He looks completely like a man who will

neither cheat nor be cheated : and such is his character—an upright, downright English yeoman—just always, and kind in a rough way—but given to fits of anger, and filled with an abhorrence of pilfering, and idleness, and trickery of all sorts, that makes him strict as a master, and somewhat stern at workhouse and vestry. I doubt if he will greatly relish the mode in which Jem and Mabel are administering the hoe in his wheat-drills. He will not reach the gate yet ; for his usual steady active pace is turned, by a recent accident, into an unequal, impatient halt—as if he were alike angry with his lameness and the cause. I must speak to him as he passes—not merely as a due courtesy to a good neighbour, but to give the delinquents in the field notice to resume their hoeing ; but not a word of the limp—that is a sore subject.

“ A fine day, Mr. Thorpe ! ”

“ We want rain, ma’am ! ”

And on, with great civility, but without pausing a moment, he is gone. He’ll certainly catch Mabel and her lover philandering over his wheat-furrows. Well, that may take its chance !—they have his lameness in their favour—only that the cause of that lameness has made the worthy farmer unusually cross. I think I must confide the story to my readers.

Gipsies and beggars do not in general much inhabit our neighbourhood ; but, about half a mile off, there is a den so convenient for strollers and vagabonds, that it sometimes tempts the rogues to a few days’ sojourn. It is, in truth, nothing more than a deserted brick-kiln, by the side of a lonely lane. But there is something so snug and comfortable in the old building (always keeping in view gipsy notions of comfort) ; the blackened walls are so backed by the steep hill on whose side they are built—so fenced from the bleak north-east, and letting in so gaily the pleasant western sun ; and the wide rugged impassable lane (used only as a road to the kiln, and with that abandoned) is at once so solitary and deserted, and so close to the inhabited and populous world, that

it seems made for a tribe whose prime requisites in a habitation are shelter, privacy, and a vicinity to farm-yards.

Accordingly, about a month ago, a pretty strong encampment, evidently gipsies, took up their abode in the kiln. The party consisted of two or three tall, lean, sinister-looking men, who went about the country mending pots and kettles, and driving a small trade in old iron; one or two children, unnaturally quiet; the spies of the crew; an old woman, who sold matches and told fortunes; a young woman, with an infant strapped to her back, who begged; several hungry-looking dogs, and three ragged donkeys. The arrival of these vagabonds spread a general consternation through the village. Gamekeepers and housewives were in equal dismay. Snares were found in the preserves—poultry vanished from the farm-yards—a lamb was lost from the lea—and a damask tablecloth, belonging to the worshipful the Mayor of W——, was abstracted from the drying-ground of Rachel Strong, the most celebrated laundress in these parts, to whom it had been sent for the benefit of country washing. No end to the pilfering, and the stories of pilfering! The inhabitants of the kiln were not only thieves in themselves, but the cause of thievery in others. “The gipsies!” was the answer general to every inquiry for things missing.

Farmer Thorpe—whose dwelling, with its variety of out-buildings—barns, ricks, and stables—is only separated by a meadow and a small coppice from the lane that leads to the gipsy retreat—was particularly annoyed by this visitation. Two couple of full-grown ducks, and a whole brood of early chickens, disappeared in one night; and Mrs. Thorpe fretted over the loss, and the farmer was indignant at the roguery. He set traps, let loose mastiffs, and put in action all the resources of village police—but in vain. Every night property went; and the culprits, however strongly suspected, still continued unamenable to the law.

At last, one morning, the great Chanticleer of the farm-

yard—a cock of a million, with an unrivalled crow—a matchless strut, and plumage all gold and green; and orange and purple—gorgeous as a peacock, and fierce as a he-turkey—Chanticleer, the pride and glory of the yard, was missing! and Mrs. Thorpe's lamentations and her husband's anger redoubled. Vowing vengeance against the gipsies, he went to the door to survey a young blood mare of his own breeding; and as he stood at the gate—now bemoaning Chanticleer—now cursing the gipsies—now admiring the bay filly—his neighbour, Dame Simmons—the identical lady of the mop, who occasionally chared at the house—came to give him the comfortable information that she had certainly heard Chanticleer—she was quite ready to swear to Chanticleer's voice—crowing in the brick-kiln. No time, she added, should be lost, if Farmer Thorpe wished to rescue that illustrious cock, and to punish the culprits—since the gipsies, when she passed the place, were preparing to decamp.

No time *was* lost. In one moment Farmer Thorpe was on the bay filly's unsaddled back, with the halter for a bridle; and, in the next, they were on full gallop towards the kiln. But, alas! alas! “the more haste the worse speed,” says the wisdom of nations. Just as they arrived at the spot from which the procession—gipsies, dogs, and donkeys—and Chanticleer in a sack, shrieking most vigorously—were proceeding on their travels, the young blood mare—whether startled at the unusual *cortége*, or the rough ways, or the hideous noise of her old friend, the cock—suddenly reared and threw her master, who lay in all the agony of a sprained ankle, unable to rise from the ground; whilst the whole tribe, with poor Chanticleer their prisoner, marched triumphantly past him, utterly regardless of his threats and imprecations. In this plight was the unlucky farmer discovered, about half an hour afterwards, by his wife, the constable, and a party of his own labourers, who came to give him assistance in securing the culprits; of whom, notwithstanding an instant and active

search through the neighbourhood, nothing has yet transpired. We shall hardly see them again in these parts, and have almost done talking of them. The village is returned to its old state of order and honesty ; the Mayor of W—— has replaced his table-cloth, and Mrs. Thorpe her cock ; and the poor farmer's lame ankle is all that remains to give token of the gipsies.

Here we are at the turning, which, edging round by the coppice, branches off to their some-time den : the other bend to the right leads up a gentle ascent to the vicarage, and that is our way. How fine a view of the little parsonage we have from hence, between those arching elms, which enclose it like a picture in a frame ! and how pretty a picture it forms, with its three pointed roofs, its snug porch, and its casement windows glittering from amid the china-roses ! What a nest of peace and comfort ! Farther on, almost at the summit of the hill, stands the old church with its massy tower—a row of superb lime-trees running along one side of the church-yard, and a cluster of dark yews shading the other. Few country churches have so much to boast in architectural beauty, or in grandeur of situation.

We lose sight of it as we mount the hill, the lane narrowing and winding between deep banks, surmounted by high hedges, excluding all prospects till we reach the front of the vicarage, and catch across the gate of the opposite field a burst of country the most extensive and the most beautiful—field and village, mansion and cot, town and river, all smiling under the sparkling sun of May, and united and harmonized by the profusion of hedge-row timber in its freshest verdure, giving a rich woodland character to the scene, till it is terminated in the distance by the blue line of the Hampshire hills almost melting into the horizon. Such is the view from the vicarage. But it is too sunny and too windy to stand about out of doors, and time to finish our ramble. Down the hill, and round the corner, and past Farmer Thorpe's house, and one glance at the wheat-hoers, and then we will go home.

Ah! it is just as I feared. Jem and Mabel have been parted: they are now at opposite sides of the field—he looking very angry, working rapidly and violently, and doing more harm than good—she looking tolerably sulky, and just moving her hoe, but evidently doing nothing at all. Farmer Thorpe, on his part, is standing in the middle of the field, observing, but pretending not to observe, the little humours of the separated lovers. There is a lurking smile about the corners of his mouth that bespeaks him more amused than angry. He is a kind person after all, and will certainly make no mischief. I should not even wonder if he espoused Jem Tanner's cause; and, for certain, if any one can prevail on the little clerk to give up his squinting favourite in favour of true love, Farmer Thorpe is the man.

THE CHALK-PIT.

ONE of the most admirable persons whom I have ever known, is my friend Mrs. Mansfield, the wife of the good vicar of Aberleigh. Her daughters are just what might be expected from girls trained under such a mother. Of Clara, the youngest, I have spoken elsewhere. Ellen, the eldest sister, is as delightful a piece of sunshine and gaiety as ever gladdened a country home. One never thinks whether she is pretty, there is such a play of feature, such a light in her dark eye, such an alternation of blush and smile on her animated countenance; for Ellen has her mother's trick of blushing, although her "eloquent blood" speaks through the medium of a richer and browner skin. One forgets to make up one's mind as to her prettiness; but it is quite certain that she is charming.

She has, in the very highest degree, those invaluable every-day spirits which require no artificial stimuli, no public

amusements, no company, no flattery, no praise. Her sprightliness is altogether domestic. Her own dear family, and a few dear friends, are all the listeners she ever thinks of. No one doubts but Ellen might be a wit, if she would : she is saved from that dangerous distinction as much by natural modesty as by a kind and constant consideration for the feelings of others. I have often seen a repartee flashing and laughing in her bright eyes, but seldom, very seldom, heard it escape her lips ; never unless quite equally matched and challenged to such a bout of "bated foils" by some admirer of her playful conversation. They who have themselves that splendid but delusive talent, can best estimate the merit of such forbearance. Governed as it is in her, it makes the delight of the house, and supplies perpetual amusement to herself and to all about her.

Another of her delightful and delighting amusements, is her remarkable skill in drawing flowers. I have never seen any portraits so exactly resembling the originals, as her carnations and geraniums. If they could see themselves in her paintings, they might think that it was their own pretty selves in their looking-glass, the water. One reason for this wonderful verisimilitude is, that our fair artist never flatters the flowers that sit to her ; never puts leaves that ought to be there, but are not there ; never makes them hold up their heads unreasonably, or places them in an attitude, or forces them into a group. Just as they are, she sets them down ; and if she does make any slight deviation from her models, she is so well acquainted with their persons and habits, that all is in keeping ; you feel that so the plant might have looked. By the way, I do not know any accomplishment that I would more earnestly recommend to my young friends than this of flower-painting. It is a most quiet, unpretending, womanly employment ; a great amusement within doors, and a constant pleasure without. The enjoyment of a country walk is much enhanced when the chequered fritillary or the tinted wood

anemone are to be sought, and found, and gathered, and made our own ; and the dear domestic spots, haunted by

“ Retired leisure,

Who in trim gardens takes his pleasure,”

are doubly gardens when the dahlias and china-asters, after flourishing there for their little day, are to reblossom on paper. Then it supplies such pretty keepsakes, the uncostly remembrances which are so pleasant to give and to take ; and, above all, it fosters and sharpens the habit of observation and the love of truth. How much of what is excellent in art, in literature, in conversation, and in conduct, is comprised in that little word !

Ellen had great delight in comparing our Sylvan Flora with the minute and fairy blossoms of the South Downs, where she had passed the greater part of her life. She could not but admit the superior luxuriance and variety of our woodland plants, and yet she had a good deal to say in favour of the delicate, flowery carpet, which clothes the green hills of Sussex ; and in fact was on that point of honour a little jealous—a little, a very little, the least in the world, touchy. She loved her former abode, the abode of her childhood, with enthusiasm : the downs’ ; the sea, whose sound, as she said, seemed to follow her to her inland home, to dwell within her as it does in the folds of the sea-shell ; and, above all, she loved her old neighbours, high and low. I do not know whether Mrs. Mansfield or her daughters returned oftenest to the “simple annals of the *Sussex* poor.” It was a subject of which they never wearied ; and we to whom they came, liked them the more for their clinging and lingering affection for those whom they had left. We received it as a pledge of what they would feel for us when we became better acquainted,—a pledge which has been amply redeemed. I flatter myself that Aberleigh now almost rivals their dear old parish ; only that Clara, who has been here three years, and is now eighteen, says, very gravely, that “people as they grow old,

cannot be expected to form the very strong local attachments which they did when they were young." I wonder how old Clara will think herself when she comes to be eight-and-twenty ?

Between Ellen's stories and her mother's there is usually a characteristic difference ; those of the one being merry, those of the other, grave. One occurrence, however, was equally impressed on the mind of either. I shall try to tell it as shortly and simply as it was told to me ; but it will want the charm of Mrs. Mansfield's touching voice, and of Ellen's glistering eyes.

Toward the bottom of one of the green hills of the parish of Lanton, was a large deserted chalk-pit ; a solemn and ghastly-looking place, blackened in one part by an old lime-kiln, whose ruinous fragments still remained, and in others mossy and weather-stained, and tinted with every variety of colour—green, yellow, and brown. The excavation extended far within the sides of the hill, and the edges were fringed by brier and bramble and ivy, contrasting strongly with the smooth, level verdure of the turf above, whilst plants of a ranker growth, nettles, docks, and fumatory, sprang up beneath, adding to the wildness and desolation of the scene. The road that led by the pit was little frequented. The place had an evil name ; none cared to pass it even in the glare of the noon-day sun ; and the villagers would rather go a mile about, than catch a glimpse of it when the pale moonlight brought into full relief those cavernous white walls, and the dark briers and ivy waved fitfully in the night wind. It was a vague and shuddering feeling. None knew why he feared, or what ; but the awe and the avoidance were general, and the owls and the bats remained in undisturbed possession of Lanton chalk-pit.

One October day, the lively work of ploughing, and wheat-sowing, and harrowing, was going on all at once in a great field just beyond the dreaded spot : a pretty and an interesting scene, especially on sloping ground, and under a gleaming

sun throwing an ever-shifting play of light and shadow over the landscape. Towards noon, however, the clouds began to gather, and one of the tremendous pelting showers, peculiar to the coast, came suddenly on. Seedsmen, ploughmen, and carters, hastened home with their teams, leaving the boys to follow; and they, five in number, set out at their fullest speed. The storm increased apace; and it was evident that their thin jackets and old smock-frocks would be drenched through and through long before they could reach Lanton Great Farm. In this dilemma, James Goddard, a stout lad of fifteen, the biggest and boldest of the party, proposed to take shelter in the chalk-pit. Boys are naturally thoughtless and fearless; the real inconvenience was more than enough to counterbalance the imaginary danger, and they all willingly adopted the plan, except one timid child, eight years old, who shrunk and hung back.

Harry Lee was a widow's son. His father, a fisherman, had perished at sea, a few months after the birth of his only child; and his mother, a fond and delicate woman, had reared him delicately and fondly, beyond her apparent means. Night and day had she laboured for her poor Harry; and nothing but a long illness and the known kindness of the farmer in whose service he was placed, had induced her to part with him at so early an age.

Harry was, indeed, a sweet and gracious boy, noticed by every stranger for his gentleness and beauty. He had a fair, blooming, open countenance; large, mild, blue eyes, which seemed to ask kindness in every glance; and a quantity of shining light hair, curling in ringlets round his neck. He was the best reader in Mrs. Mansfield's Sunday-school; and only the day before, Miss Clara had given him a dinner to carry home to his mother, in reward of his proficiency: indeed, although they tried to conceal it, Harry was the decided favourite of both the young ladies. James Goddard, under whom he worked, and to whose care he had been tearfully

committed by the widow Lee, was equally fond of him, in a rougher way; and in the present instance, seeing the delicate boy shivering between cold and fear at the outside of the pit, (for the same constitutional timidity which prevented his entering, hindered him from going home by himself,) he caught him up in his arms, brought him in, and deposited him in the snuggest recess, on a heap of dry chalk. "Well, Harry, is not this better than standing in the wet?" said he kindly, sitting down by his protégé, and sharing with him a huge luncheon of bread and cheese; and the poor child smiled in his face, thanked him, and kissed him as he had been used to kiss his mother.

Half an hour had passed away in boyish talk, and still the storm continued. At last James Goddard thought that he heard a strange and unaccustomed sound, as of bursting or cracking—an awful and indescribable sound—low, and yet distinctly audible, although the wind and rain were raging, and the boys loud in mirth and laughter. He seemed to feel the sound, as he said afterwards; and was just about to question his companions if they too heard that unearthly noise; when a horseman passed along the road, making signs to them and shouting. His words were drowned in the tempest; James rushed out to inquire his meaning, and in that moment the side of the chalk-pit fell in! He heard a crash and a scream—the death scream!—felt his back grazed by the descending mass; and, turning round, saw the hill rent, as by an earthquake, and the excavation which had sheltered them, filled, piled, heaped up, by the still quivering and gigantic fragments—no vestige left to tell where it was, or where his wretched companions lay buried!

"Harry! Harry! the child! the child!" was his first thought and his first exclamation; "Help! instant help!" was the next, and, assisted by the stranger horseman, whose speed had been stayed by the awful catastrophe, the village of Lanton was quickly alarmed, and its inhabitants assembled

on the spot. Who may describe that scene? Fathers, brothers, kinsmen, friends, digging literally for life! every nerve quivering with exertion, and yet all exertion felt to be unavailing. Mothers and sisters looking on in agony; and the poor widow Lee, and poor, poor James Goddard, the self-accuser! A thousand and a thousand times did he crave pardon of that distracted mother, for the peril—the death of her son; for James felt that there could be no hope for the helpless child, and tears, such as no personal calamity could have drawn from the strong-hearted lad, fell fast for his fate. Hour after hour the men of Lanton laboured, and all was in vain. The mass seemed impenetrable, inexhaustible. Toward sunset one boy appeared, crushed and dead; another, who showed some slight signs of life, and who still lives, a cripple; a third, dead; and then, last of all, Harry Lee. Alas! only by his raiment could that fond mother know her child! His death must have been instantaneous. She did not linger long. The three boys were interred together in Lanton church-yard on the succeeding Sabbath; and before the end of the year, the widow Lee was laid by her son.

END OF VOL. I.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.

v/s

BOUND BY
BURN,
HATTON GARDEN

